

DIRECTIONS

INSTIGATIONS

To the DUTY of  
PRAYER

How, and why the Heart is to be  
Kept with Diligence

Pressing Arguments and Directions for Hearing  
the Voice of the Rod

Being the Sum and Substance of nine Sermons.  
By Mr. Andrew Gray, late Minister of the  
Gospel in Glasgow.

The third Impression, newly Corrected and  
Amended.

Coloss: 4: 2: Continue in prayer, and watch in the  
same with thanksgiving.  
Prov: 23: 26: My son, give me thy heart.  
Psal: 94: 12: Blessed is the man whom thou chast-  
nest, O Lord, and teachest out of thy law.

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of Andrew Anderson, Printer to the Kings  
Excellent Majesty. Anno DOM. 1698.

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# TO THE READER:

Christian Reader,

**I**T was not the design of the Lords  
Servant who Preached these follow-  
ing Sermons, to have them thus  
publisht: And if he had survived  
the publishing of them, and of his  
other Sermons ~~ready~~ Printed, ( and  
through importunity had condescended  
they should be put to the Press ) they would,  
no doubt, have come forth more refined,  
and better digested: and therefore be in-  
treated, Courteous Reader, rather take in  
good part what is intended for the  
publick good, than to cavill at it, which  
doubtless he will do, who is a true  
Genius, considering that what thou hast here was  
Gleaned by a Church-writer, gathering to-  
gether the substance of the matter from the  
mouth of the Speaker. And although, for  
the most part, the expressions be the same  
as they were spoken: yet considering that



**DIRECTIONS and INVESTIGATIONS**

**to the Duty of Prayer, yet such an**

**SERMON**

**1 Thes. 5. 17. Pray without ceasing.**

**G**odliness is to sublime and divine a thing, and doth so highly elevate the Believer, that is endued with it, that by it he is admitted unto that high pinnacle of honour, and inconceivable pitch of dignity, as to be made like unto God, and to have a glorious participation of his divine nature, so that we need not much Rhetorick to commend this unto you who have tasted of the sweetness of it; for wisdom will be justified of her Children, Mat. 12. 19. But there are some of you who favour not the things of God, and to whom these things do appear but as so ne Utopian fancy, and notions of a mans brain, who are not much in contemplation of these things. So that though we could speak upon this subject, in such a manner, that the glorious light of it should surround us yet the blind heart cannot see it, because there is a dungeon within, and till Christ open our eyes (as well as reveal his light) we cannot be enlightened by it. But had we once as much divine understanding, as to take it up in its beauty and necessity, in its advantage and dignity, in its comeliness and equity, we should esteem it the principal thing which we have to do in all our life time, and should dig for it as for hid treasures. Prov. 2. 4. And there is no part of this Royal and beautiful ornament of godliness, but it may commend and ingratiate it self, to any who do not close their eyes. And amongst all the beautiful effects and parts of godliness, this duty and grace of prayer is not the least and doth not a little commend it, and though it ap-

*Directions and Inligations.*

pear sometimes little amongst the thousands of the graces of the Spirit; yet out of it have come excellent things, and it hath not counted it presumption to compare it self with the highest and chiefest. It is that (no doubt) by which a soul is elevated to converse & talk with God, with the holy and blessed Trinity; yet and that as often and freely as the Christian pleaseth for there is a door of access standing always open, by which we may enter in and communicate, and impart our thoughts to God, and to have him making known his mind to us. O this is a dignity and a priviledge that hath been purchased unto us, at an infinite rate and value, even the precious blood of Christ; for no doubt, the door of our access unto God, is through the vail of his flesh: And were this more deeply engraven upon our Spirits, we should improve this dignity more, did we once believe the unspeakable highnes of this duty of prayer, and the incomprehensible Essence of God; that which we now neglect through ignorance, we should scarce to meddle with it through a sort of Reverence and fear, being afraid to touch the vail, lest we should be shot through, and looking upon our selves, as unworthy to lift up our eyes to heaven, because we have reproached him so often.

Now there are these two comprehensible and cardinal evils, which doth exceedingly mar and intercept the obedience of Christians unto this great and precious command of *Praying without ceasing* and they are these two; Atheism and Idolatry: too much confidence in our selves, and too much leaning to our own understanding, which is Idolatry, it being a visible breach of the first command, *Thou shalt have no other gods before me, Exod. 20 3* And too little confidence and trusting in God, which is our Atheism, imploring our selves in all, and employing God in nothing. So that our blessed Lord may propose that unanswerable challenge and question to many of us, *Huberta have ye asked nothing in my name, John 6 24* And what is this practice, but invol-

involving of our selves in that woful curse, *Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, whose heart departeth from the Lord; should the living seek the dead, and not grieve God? who gives to me all things liberally to enjoy.* *Job. 41. 15.* Where we dwell more under the spiritual impression of our utter inability and impotency to save our selves, and that compleat ability and infinit power which is in him to help us, we would bind this precious Command of Prayer as a chain of gold about our neck, and make it an ornament of grace to our heads. *Prov. 1. 9.* We should certainly be constrained to cry forth, *All that the Lord hath commanded us, we will do.* *Deut. 5. 27.* And pray that there may be such a heart given to us, as to have our practice correspondent unto our resolutions.

Q. What a glorious and unspeakable dignity suppose you it to be, to be daily having your walk in Heaven, in those beautiful streets that are all paved with massonry and gold; and to be conversing with him, whose fellowship is of more infinite worth than all imperial dignities. A Christian that is much exercised in Prayer, may have this to say when he is passing thorow the gates of death, to long and endless eternity, that he is now to change his place, but not his company; Heaven may be to him but a blessed Transition to a more constant and immediat enjoyment of God. Q. what a blessed day suppose ye it to be, when ye shall be altogether without the reach of the necessity of this duty, and noble exercise of the grace of Prayer? For tho, it be a blessed and most divine exercise, yet it involves an imperfection in its bosom; and so it must needs pass away, when that which is perfect shall come. *1 Cor. 13. 10.* Q! to be much in correspondence with him, and in maintaining communion and fellowship with him, ask of him and it were to the half of his Kingdom, yet more, whatsoever ye ask in his Name, according to his will, and what he sees fit in his wisdom for your good, he showing he will grant it to you, *Mat. 21. 21.* and will

what is our duty? *Our duty is not such a*  
*compulsive precept as is laid to any duty as this*  
*is a manner. It is the sweet compend and epitome of*  
*all Christian precepts. What is intended here? All*  
*things, no doubt, for your good are here included, and*  
*nothing of that kind is excluded. We confess, if our*  
*employments were regulate according to our desires,*  
*they should come far short of that which we stand in*  
*need of, and much more they should come short of*  
*that which he is willing to give; and therefore we are*  
*intended to say that he will not in his compassion to*  
*us by the rule of our desires, but by that precious rule*  
*of his free and condescending grace, for he is able to*  
*give us all that we are able to ask or think. Eph. 3. O if ye would ask what is*  
*the great and chiefest exercise which a Christian ought*  
*to have while he is here below? Believe it, I could*  
*give no answer so suitable as prayer. And if it were*  
*asked secondly, what ought to be the great and em-*  
*inent exercise of a Christian while he is here? It is pray-*  
*ing above all things and above all things prayer. I*  
*mean true, serious, sincere, and not hypocritical prayer;*  
*repleasing, retiring and diverting our selves from all*  
*other things, to wrestle with God, to leave our ser-*  
*vants and our selves at the foot of the altar, untill we*  
*are up, and worship God, and bury our idols under*  
*the villosities, and to wash our selves from our pollu-*  
*tions, when we go up to Babel, to return from the*  
*confused noise of the multitude of our affairs, unto the*  
*pleasant delighting our selves in God. A Christian (the sound*  
*of whose feet is much heard in the streets of the New Je-*  
*rusalem, who, in a manner, is anticipating the time of his*  
*endless enjoyment of him) who is daily bringing down*  
*Heaven onto Earth, or rather elevating himself towards*  
*Heaven, hearing of such an endless Command as this,*  
*pray without ceasing. Rom. 12. 12. ) is constrained to*  
*cry forth, Lord what shall I do that I should be mindful of*  
*thee? O the Son of man that thou shouldst visit him, and that*  
*thou*

that hath highly magnified him; and I conceive if a Christian would look upon all the duties of Religion under a right notion and apprehension; certainly he will rather take them up as his dignity, than his duty and rather as the singular Tokens and significations of the infinite respect and love of God towards him, than any was given and commanded him. Seeing by the practice of them, we shall testify our thankfulness and obedience towards him; surely it were our bondage, and not our liberty, to be freed from this blessed and glorious work of his commandments. What a bondage were it for an immortal Soul; not alive to be living in a direct line of subordination to him; but a natural man hearing of this decree and command of God coming forth, pray without ceasing; will cry out, *This is a hard saying, who can bear it?* John 6:60. We ought to study to be subordinated to God, and to subjection unto nothing which may hinder our subordination unto him, and he who counts the service of the Lord a weariness, and doth snuff at it, as he were; and who never knew what it was to be bound in Spirit; till he goes to prayer, believe me, that man is not much taken up in the obedience of this noble and most excellent commandment, *pray without ceasing.*

Now being come to the Words, having spoken at large of that radical and noble grace of Faith; we are come to speak of this excellent grace of prayer; and I would have none of you mistaking the nature of this command, of excellent grace; for to conceive that the Spirit doth here so recompensate and oblige Christian duties, as to confine him within it is weakness and graceless prayer; so that we should constantly and perpetually bestir up in this exercise, and so neglect the exercise of all other duties: into which this is not the meaning of this word; for the words going before the text may remove this mistake; *that ye may be able to stand in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.* 1 Thess. 5:16. But we conceive it is holden for these things; and we are to abide in it.



First, that *Without* our lawful diversions and interruptions from this divine exercise and employment in this noble duty and grace of Prayer, we may be keeping our selves in a praying frame and disposition, so that when occasion presents it self to us, we may retire our selves from the noise of our secular affairs, and converse with him; a practice unknown to the most part of the Christians of this generation, who betwixt the time of their conversing with God, and their Addresses to his Throne, gives leave to wander after many vain impertinencies, and to go abroad in the path of their idols: and to entangle themselves with the affairs of this World: so that (in a manner) they are incapacitated for this holy and divine exercise of the duty of prayer, which doth require much divine abstractness from the world, and the things thereof, and much composedness of spirit, in which our involving of our selves too much in our affairs (that do but by the way belong unto us) doth so much interrupt and hinder us; and this exhortation *pray without ceasing*, hold forth unto us that there is no condition, nor estate of life, wherein we can be can be placed that exempteth us from the necessity and obedience of being much in the exercise of this noble and excellent duty of the grace of Prayer. For if we be under bonds, we must pray that we may be enlarged; and if he lift up the light of his countenance upon us, we must pray that we may be helped to walk humbly with GOD, and to erect to our selves a dwelling in the dust, when he erecteth to us a Throne in Heaven, and to be enabled not to stir him up, nor awake him before he please, GOD hath in the depth of his infinite wisdom and unsearchable love towards man, so ordered it, that continual dependence upon him is both our duty and dignity.

And then secondly, it holds out this unto us, that in the midst of all our business, and other affairs that

that we should be sending forth secret and divine ejaculations towards God: which practise was no mystery unto him, for in the midst of his Testament, having blessed six of his sons, and having other six, to blest he breaks forth with that divine thought, *I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord* Gen. 49. 18. neither was this a mystery unto godly Melchizedek, while he was standing before the King, with the cup in his hand, did pray into the Lord in his secret and silent way, *Nehr. 2. 4. He prayed unto the God of Heaven.*

And then lastly, this command and exhortation, *Pray without ceasing*, hold forth this unto us, that we should lay hold; yea, more, that we should watch to day hold upon every opportunity for this duty of Prayer: yea more, that we should labour for all occasions for the enjoying of this admirable dignity, which is the scope of that noble command. 1. Pet. 4. 7. *But (saith he) the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.* A practice alas! that is not much now in request, and that the Christians of this Generation do very much undervalue and set at naught; and we conceive, that which doth so much interrupt our obedience unto this command of praying in publick, and in our praying one with another, is either our Atheism, or our pride; we being more afraid to speak before men, nor to speak before God, which is our Atheism; so that our silence is rather from our reverence of men, than from our reverence of God. And then our pride hinders us from it, we being afraid, lest going about that duty, we discover our nakedness, and make our shame to appear; and in our impertinent denials of our obedience unto this desire, we study to cover the matter with a pretext of humility, and to gain reputation amongst men, that pride is hid from our eyes, and that we will walk low, when in the mean time we sit on high places: and certainly that

Directions and Application

which both so much obstruct our liberty, and our  
 having access unto God in our praying one with  
 another, is our greater fear of these before whom we  
 pray than of him whom we pray to, and no doubt, the  
 divine impression of deity upon our hearts, would make  
 us to get this overcome. Or it is our pride that hin-  
 ders us from high thoughts of God, and hinders and  
 interrupts this holy and divine exercise of the grace of  
 prayer, even our selves; which is the great *Diana*,  
 which we so much adore; and about the adorning of  
 which and her silver shrines (to speak) so much  
 of our talk and labour is spent; we still proposing  
 that would end in all our Actions, the exalting of our  
 self, and attaining reputation amongst men; and  
 therefore it comes to pass, that there is little or no  
 advantage redounding to us by the exercise of pub-  
 lick prayer; so that we may say that which one spoke  
 to another purpose, *Elm inter homines fit minor ho-*  
*mo creditur*, for we may say this, that when we have  
 been amongst Christians, we do oftentimes return,  
 less Christians, for if in our praying one with another  
 we be answered according to the fads of our heart,  
 and have liberty of words, and perhaps some real ac-  
 cess to the Throne of Grace, when God lifts us up, we  
 lift up our selves, being exalted above measure, and  
 sacrificing to our own net, and making a secret feast to  
 our Dagon, within the Temple of our Hearts pro-  
 viding our selves to be but empty vases, bringing  
 forth fruit unto our selves, *Hos. 10. 17*. And hence it  
 is (if a Christian will observe it) that he doth not  
 much advance in the work of mortification by his  
 publick enlargements, and that the power of in-  
 quity in him is not much restrained by these; but  
 presently after his weeping over himself for some short  
 coming, some new temptation presenting it self unto  
 him, involves him in the like, or (it may be) in a  
 worse sin: and ordinarily our publick enjoyments  
 and enlargements are not constant and permanent  
 by

by our searching his holy Spirit. However, by the way we would say that which a heathen said, is much for a man to be as serious alone in the exercise of his mind and affections in pursuing after these duties; as when he is in company, and that which exceedingly hinders a mans obedience when he is alone unto this command, *Pray without ceasing*, is either the want of a solid conviction of the necessity of this duty, or else it flows from a not being convinced of the advantage that may be found in this exercise of our secret retirements with God and abstracting our selves from the noise of the World, to converse with him. What joy in the holy Ghost? what mortification of our Idols? what divine conformity and likeness of the Lord. Blessed and glorious Image might we attain to by this? As likewise we may superadd this, the want of the solid conviction of these unspeakable disadvantages, that are to be found in our woful neglecting and sinful suspending of the exercise of this duty when we are alone, which are best known to these who are most conversant with their own spirit; but sure we are, through the slothfulness of our hands our houses droppeh thorow, and our building doth decay: and we are become remarkable servants unto our lusts and corruptions.

Now is there any of you that at the very reading of these words, *pray without ceasing* may not reprove himself and judge himself eminently guilty of the breach of this commandment and excellent duty? that whereas *Bliphaz* did accuse *Job*, *O thou restrainest prayer before God. Job. 1. 5. 14.* surely he may justly charge it upon many; yea and alas! upon the most part of the Christians of this generation, there are many, I fear here, who do pass under the notion of *Sapient* and *Real* Christians, who did never much study to obey this command; there are many here who need not much Arithmetick to calculate all

all their Prayers that they have poured out before this Throne. O! whether is your devotion grieved if David and David were now alive, would not their practice condemn the Christians of this generation, who morning, at noon, and at the evening-tide did call upon him, yea in the silent watches of the night, and at midnight did rise, and seek their Maker, who gives unto his own when he sings in the saddest night of this affliction? we conceive also, all Anna that precious woman were now alive, to whom that excellent testimony is given, Luke 21. 37. *She was a widow about fourscore four years, which departed not from the Temple, but served God with fasting and praying night and day;* might she not provoke many women, yea, all men and women unto an holy emulation in this so singular and divine practice? Alas, there is none now, yea upon whom so brave a testimony could be passed as was upon her. We must either conceive, that the way to Heaven is more easie than it was before in ancient time, or else that there is not so much delight and solace to be had in him, as was before: were we daily tasting of that pure river of life that flows but from beneath the Throne of God, and of its sweetness, which causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak, we would be more taken up in giving obedience unto this precious command of prayer; and if we were sleeping more in the bed of love, we would be less sleeping in the bed of security; we would likewise embrace more abstractedness from the world, and more familiarity with God. O, but our visits are rare, because we are not constant in prayer, and fervent in spirit, seeking the Lord. It is no wonder that we forget what an One he is, because it is long since we did behold him. We may forget his form and loveliness, there is such a number of days and woful space of time intervening betwixt our enjoyment of him.

Now

*of the Duty of Prayer*

Now we shal not dwell long, in pointing of unto you what prayer is, we conceive it is a sweet travelling and trafficking of the soul betwixt emptiness and fulness, betwixt want and all-sufficiency, and betwixt our inability to help our selves, and his ability to help us; the one depth calling unto the other depth, or in short, it is a souls conference with God.

Neither shal we stand in proving of this unto you, that it is the duty of a Christian to be much taken up in the continual exercise of this duty of prayer, the Text doth sufficiently prove it; But we shal only for the more clearing of this, point out one place of Scripture, and that is in *Ephes. 6. 18.* where we are exhorted to *pray with all manner of prayer and supplication, &c.* which we conceive to be understood both of publick and privat prayer, and that we should watch to the exercise of both these, and that we should not be in the exercise of these by starts and fits, but that we should continue in them with all perseverance, and the Text doth clearly hold forth.

Neither shal we insist long in speaking unto this, what is the spirit of prayer. We conceive it doth not stand in that promptness and volubility of language that we use before him, for there may be much of that, and little of the spirit; and upon the contrair, there may be little of that, or nothing at all, and yet much of the spirit; yea, we are certain that the spirit is sometimes an impediment unto much languages; for either in our presenting or expressing our grief before God, our spirits are so overwhelmed within us, and so troubled, that we cannot speak, so that sighs, or silent groans are rather our obduty, than the multitude of words. So likewise in the exercise of joy, the soul is so filled, and in a manner, overshadowed with the Holy Ghost, that the Christian is rapt up in holy admiration and a-  
stondishment;

astonishment, so that in a manner he loſeth not only the exerciſe of invention, but alſo the exerciſe of ſpeech; he is ſo much taken up in gazing at that which he doth enjoy, and in a pleaſant beholding and contemplation of him who hath raviſhed him with the of his eyes, and with one chain of his neck, ſo that he can ſpeak no more, but beginneth to wonder, his tongue cleaveth to the roof of his mouth, and his judgement is ſo confounded with the unexprefſible ſweetneſs and glory of him that appeareth, and his affection doth ſo ſwell and run over all its banks, that in a manner, he is cloathed with a bleſſed impoſſibility to have the uſe of his tongue, and therefore it begins to admire that which he cannot ſpeak; however he that hath muſt of theſe things, hath nothing over, and he that hath little, hath no lack.

Neither doth the ſpirit of prayer conſiſt in the ſweetneſs and eloquence of our dictions, theſe things being rather to prove our ſelves Orators, than ſuch as pray in the Holy Ghoſt.

But we conceive it doth more conſiſt in the voice of the affections, nor in the voice of words, and in having unexprefſible and unutterable ſighs and groans of the ſpirit, which is indeed that true ſpirit of Adoption which he hath given unto us, whereby we cry unto him, *Abba, Father, Gal. 4. 6.* If we ſpeak no more in prayer than what our affections and ſouls do ſpeak, truly we would not ſpeak much, if we ſpeak more with zeal and affection, that gain opportunity that we have in theſe devout prayers, would be much compendized and abridged. Neither ſhall we ſpeak long on this, how much yet in a Chriſtian concernment to be continued ſtill the abſolute neceſſity of a Mediator, and as a days map, that muſt lay his hand upon us in all our approaches unto God, and truly he muſt convey our many notions and deſires upon him, beſides deep



Impression of the need that you have of Jesus Christ, and of him that hath taken that glorious Title and Attribute unto himself of being the Counsellor, *Isai.* 9. 6. were engraven upon your spirits, when ye went to prayer, you should find it a difficulty to fall upon the number of the days; and I conceive that the want of the right apprehensions and uptakings of God, and of our selves, is the reason why this great mystery and divine duty of the Gospel to wit, the employing of Jesus Christ in prayer, is so great a mystery both unto our judgments and affections. However know, that this is a duty belonging both to your knowledge and practice. There are many Christians, who to their own apprehensions, have made a great progress in the course of Christianity, who yet may turn back and learn that great and fundamental lesson to call on his Name, sure we are, were this more believed, that God is a consuming fire, without Jesus Christ, we would be so presumptuously bold as to approach before God, either in publick or in privat without him, who by his blood must quench this divine flame, and who must remove that Angel that stands with the flaming sword in his hand, marring our access to God; Christ must be to us *Melchisedek a King of righteousness and of peace.*

He no doubt, is that trying place in which God and sinners must meet: he is that glorious ladder that reaches from heaven to earth, by which we must ascend up to God: his humanity (which is the foot of the ladder) is the door of our access, by which we must ascend to the top, which is his Divinity; we did once by our Iniquity fix a gulf between God and us; but Jesus Christ by taking on our nature, did make a golden bridge over that gulf, by which we may go over and converse with God.

And first, Surely want of the conviction of this, doth make us come with less confidence unto him: for upon what can ye build your hope, except it be upon

upon that *Son of Israel*, and on his beloved *Son* in whom he is well pleased? *Mat. 3. 17.* We ought to rest upon him who is that *Immanuel*, *God with us.*

2. As likewise the want of this, is the cause of the little reverence that you have to God in your approaches unto him; for did we once take him up under this notion, how inaccessible God is, except he be made accessible by him, who is *the way, the truth and the life*, *Joh. 14. 6.* O! how would we fear to draw near to such a holy God?

3. And this likewise is the occasion of the little confidence we have in conversing with him, we are persuaded that there is no delight in this blessed exercise, but through him who is the *union of peace* betwixt the Father and us, his divine nature is an impregnable rock which we cannot scale but by his humane nature, and we must make use of Christ in all our approaches to God, not only as one who must give us access unto him, and open a door unto us, through which we must enter into the holiest of all (he must draw aside the veil that is hanging over his face, and we must go in walking at his back, as is clear, *Rom. 9. 1.*) But we must likewise make use of Christ in all our approaches unto God, as one by whom we must be enabled to do every thing he calleth for at our hands. If the faith of that saying which is in *Joh. 14. 12.* *Without me ye can do nothing*, were more deeply engraven upon, and stamped upon the table of our hearts; we would be walking alongst our pilgrimage with the sentence of death in our bosom, and have our confidence fixed on him above. For there is not only an inability in our selves to do any thing, but also we are clothed with a woful impossibility, as that word doth hold forth, *Without me ye can do nothing.* And certainly the lower we will descend in the thoughts of our own strength, we are the more fit to receive this divine influence from him, by which we are capacitated and rendered able for the doing of every duty.

duty. We must likewise make use of Jesus Christ in all our approaches unto God, as one before whom all our prayers must be accepted before him. The sacrifices of *Judah* cannot come up with acceptance upon that golden Altar before the Throne, except they be presented by him *him who is that great Master of request*, this is clear from *Rev. 8*: whereby the Angel that is spoken of there. We understand to be the Messenger of the Covenant; and by that incense, we understand the merits of Jesus Christ, which is that precious vail that it spread over these sinful imperfections of our duties, which they must be mixed with, before they be an acceptable favour unto God. O! how doth he abominate and abhor all our prayers, if they want this precious ingredient, that sweet smelling incense, the merits of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, it is he that doth remove all these roving and vain impertinencies of ours, that we have in the exercise of that duty, and doth present them in a more divine frame and contexture. He reduces them in a few words, and makes them more effectual for the obtaining of our requests. If the consideration of this were more with us. O how would it make Jesus Christ more precious in our eyes? As likewise, it would discover unto us a more absolute necessity in having our recourse to him in all our approaches to God; such is the depth of the unfearchable grace of Christ, and of his infinite love towards sinners, that the voice of complaining on them was never heard in heaven. Christ he never spake evil, but always good of believers before his Father, notwithstanding he hath oftentimes spoken reproofs to themselves, that is clear from *Job. 17. 8*: where giving an account of the carriage and practice of his Disciples unto his Father, he doth exceedingly commend their faith, and their carriage towards him, and saith, *They have received me, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me, and yet in, Job. 14. 1.* he doth challenge their

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their saluall; the one speech he directeth to God  
his Father, and the other he directeth unto them.  
Love in a manner, doth silence all the noise of com-  
plaints with him, and maketh him always breath out  
love in his expressions of them before the Throne.  
He will be willic speaking roughly to believers here to  
themselves, but to say with reverence to his blessed  
Famey, he never telleth any ill tale of them behind  
their backs.

7. But now we shal insist a little in pointing out what  
things are convenient and suitable for a Christian to ex-  
ercise himself unto, before he go about this divine  
and holy duty in conversing and speaking to God.

And first, We think a Christian before he come and  
take upon him this holy and divine exercise of talking  
with God, he must be much in the exercise of medi-  
tation, not only of the inconceivable highness and digni-  
ty of the glorious and inexpressible person, to whom  
he is to converse, but also upon the inconceivable bal-  
ance and lowness of himself; so that by the considerati-  
on of the highness of the one, he may be provock'd to  
reverence, and by the consideration of the other, he  
may be provock'd to loathing.

8. A Christian before he go to prayer, would study  
to have a deep impression of these things which he is  
to make the matter of his supplication of to God, and  
to have them engraven upon his heart; and truly we  
think the want of this, is oftentimes the occasion of that  
woful evil of lying unto the holy Ghost, for we complain  
in prayer, and personat or counterfeitt recantment for  
these things, which never before was the grief of our  
hearts. Oftentimes we speak many things with our  
lips, and we study to have our hearts enduring these  
things that we speak. And likewise in the exercise of  
blessing and praising him, from the consideration of a-  
ny great or desirable mercy, we do personat and feign  
joy from the consideration of these things, which be-  
fore we never made the matter of our joy, because  
they

they never were much the matter of our considerations. It were, no doubt, the great advantage of the Christian in the exercise of prayer, to be much taken up in the obedience of this command, Eccles. 3. 2. *Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thy heart be hasty to utter any thing before God, for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth, therefore let thy words be few.* Seldom doth the Christian talk or speak with God, but if he had as much grace as to reflect upon it, he may be convinced that he is uttering things that are not fit to be spoken to God: O to be studying that divine abridgement of our prayers, which no doubt, would speak nothing before him, but what our hearts doth indite, there is something of this holden out in the practice of David, Psal. 45. 1. where he beginneth with that, *My heart doth indite a good matter:* and then he subjoyns, *My tongue is as the pen of a ready writer.* Our oratory might be more refined, and confined likewise, and it would be more effectual for the obtaining of our desires, if we were studying this. O that our hearts might speak more in prayer, and our tongues less, we through the multitude of business, produce multitudes of dreams to our selves.

Thirdly, This is likewise requisite for a Christian: before he go to prayer, to be studying holiness, to be endeavouring to have their filthy garments, wherewith he is clothed, changed: with change of rayment, he must put off the shoes of his feet, because he is to stand upon an holy ground. This was the commendable practice of that holy man David, Psal. 26. 6. *I will wash my hands in innocency, then I will compass thine altar, O Lord.* This is likewise clear from Exodus 19. 18. 19. where Aaron, and the sons of Levi, were to wash their hands and their feet in the brazen Laver, that did stand betwixt the Tabernacle, or the Congregation and the Altar, when they came near to minister, or burn offerings by fire unto the Lord: we must likewise endeavour much to symbolize the pre-

Office, and to have our selves walken in that laver of regeneration, and in that precious fountain that is opened to the house of David for sin and for uncleanness, Zech. 12:11: before we enter into the holiest of all, what ornament is so suitable for one that is walking unto that higher palace, but that glorious ornament of holiness, without which we are rendered unacceptable to God, and with which we may with confidence and boldness go and serve him in his holy Temple. No doubt, if the deep impression of that absolute holiness, and purity of that Majesty with whom we are to converse (when we go to prayer) were engraven upon our spirits, we should study to be like him; for the foundation of friendship, and fellowship doth somewhat stand in a similitude of natures, and somewhat in conformity one with another.

And lastly, When a Christian is going to prayer, he ought to be much in the consideration of that advantage and dignity, that is to be found in the exercise of this duty; this would make us more ardent and serious in the study of the former: and unless we superadd this to the rest, we cannot long continue in a constant endeavour, after the attainment of these three former qualifications, which are required of one that would approach unto God.

Now we shal shut up our discourse by speaking a little unto this, what ought to be the sweet companions of a Christian that is going about the exercise of this duty, in a serious, and not in a hypocritical manner.

1. He would study to have his spirit under the deep impression of a Deity, and take up this, that he is talking with one, before whom Angels (these glorious and excellent spirits) do cover their faces with their wings: which no doubt, doth point out that holy reverence that they have of him: their long familiarity and constant conversing with God, hath not removed that due and convenient distance which they ought



to keep with him; and certainly, were he known to us by no other Name, but by the Name of being merciful, yet ought we to fear the Lord, and his goodness. O how much more he being made known, and revealed to us by that great and terrible Name *Jehovah*, by which he is exalted above all Names that is in heaven, or in earth? Phil: 2: 9. And by which is pointed out that infinite distance that is betwixt God and us. No doubt, if the impression of a Deity were with us, it would remove much formality that we use in prayer; it would likewise remove much of our misbelief that we have; in all our approaches unto him; were we afraid lest that word inscription that *Paul* did discern to be engraven on an Altar at *Athens*, *to the unknown God*, were found on us, alas! I fear it may be engraven on most part of our devotions, and likewise that wherewith *Christ* did challenge the people of *Samaria*, he may challenge many of us, *Joh: 4: 23*. And it may be written on our practice, *ye worship, ye know not what*; we are those who *blasphe*me *ye idol*, and no doubt, such sacrifices as these are, *as if we were offering swines blood, and casting of a dogs neck, which are abomination unto God*, *Isa: 66: 3*.

12. That should be the sweet companion of a Christian in this exercise of prayer, the excellent grace of humility; we must put off our ornaments, and cloath ourselves with sackcloth, and spread ashes upon our heads when we begin to speak to him. He that sitteth nearest the dust; sitteth nearest the Heavens. We must be walking under the impression of this, that we are not worthy to lift up our eyes to Heaven: and, with holy *Abraham*, (upon whose effigy this was engraven, *Jam: 2: 23*. That he was a friend of God) when he begins to talk to this glorious and incomprehensible Majesty, in a manner he conceived it to be presumption, *Gen: 18: 27*. Behold now, saith he, *I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which ought not dust and ashes*. He doth prefix a note of admiration; *Behold*! importing so much that it was a bold adventure for so low a person to speak to so high a Majesty, or for so finite a creature to open his mouth unto so pure and spotless an one, that the Testimon should speak to him who is the Throne; & no doubt were this more our exercise, we might be receiving more remarkable significations of his respect and love towards us. What is the Royal gift which he giveth to these that are humble? *Grace*. For as the Apostle saith, *Jam: 4: 6*. He giveth grace to the humble, &c. His love is looking that person that is



lowest, even as the waters do seek the lowest ground. He that is first in his own estimation, is last in the estimation of God: but he that is last in his own estimation, is amongst the first in the estimation of God. Therefore, no doubt, that is a suitable oblation for a person that is to go to the court of heaven, which the Apostle Peter doth require, 1 Pet. 3. 3. *Be clothed with humility.* O! but that woful evil of pride which doth either arise from our ignorance of our selves, or from the ignorance of God, doth both obstruct our access unto him, and the return of our prayers. If we should give a description of the person that is admitted to detain Christ in his suffering, we could not give it in more convenient and suitable Terms than this, that he is of a *humble and contrite spirit.* Psal. 66. 2. and 37. 19.

III. And a third sweet companion of a Christian in the exercise of this duty of prayer, is faith and confidence in God; that we have to do with one who is the *Heater of prayer*, and who is willing to give unto us all things as we desire, if we ask in faith: for we must exercise faith, not only upon his promises, but likewise upon that glorious and incommunicable attribute of God, that is given unto him, *Psal. 65. 1.* That he is the *Heater of Prayer*: want of this, maketh us come little speed, and we think likewise, that the want of this doth make us live so little in expectation, and wait with patience and hope at the posts of his door, until we receive a return. Is it any wonder that our prayers be as the beating of the air, and the pouring out of some empty vessels, if we be not convinced of this, that he is not like unto us? God is not like *Baal*, who because of sleep, or some other business cannot give present audience to our desires, so that we need not be constrained to cut our selves with knives, or to leap upon the Altar, to provoke him to cause fire to descend upon our altar, to burn our drowned sacrifices: he is able to give audience to us, as if there were no other

ther to employ him. Multitudes of supplications will be no interruption unto the audience of our desires, he hath that royal prerogative, and eminent excellency above all Judges of the earth, that he can take in many Bills at once, which is a demonstration of the Omnipotency and infinite understanding and knowledge of God, if that word, Mat. 22. 21. 22. were believed, *whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive it*, O! how would we study to have this necessary and sweet companion of faith going alongst with us in all our prayers and *as James speaketh, Chaf. 1. 5. He that asketh let him ask in faith, for he that wavereth and doubteth, is as the waves of the sea, and can receive nothing.*

A fourth sweet companion in the exercise of prayer, is fervency. Can we live under such a wofull delusion, as to conceive that God heareth those suits & petitions which we do scarcely hear our selves, can we have much zeal in proposing our desires when we do it with such a wofal indifferency? we have the example of that holy man *David* to commend this unto you. *Psa 29 vs.* where we may behold a glorious gradation and climax; for first he says, *hear my prayer*, and that not being sufficient, he doth ascend on one step higher and saith, *hold not thy peace at my cry*, that voice being a little louder than the voice of prayer: and yet again he ascendeth one step further, and saith, *hold not thy peace at my tears*. These silent crys, the tears of a Christian have most Rhetorick, and loudest voice to heaven, their sweet emanations and flowings out of water from that precious fountain of a contrite and broken spirit, they do, no doubt ascend high, and have a great power with him who is *Almighty Jacob*, in a manner did hold that Angel that wrestled with him, with no other cord, but with the cord of supplications, as is clear from *Hos. 12. 4<sup>th</sup>* and in *Gen. 32. 26*. Did ever your eyes behold such cords and bonds made of tears? No doubt, these are of a beautiful frame and contexture, and of infinite more value then the most precious

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cious and rare chains that the greatest Princes in the world doth wear as ornaments; and truly the want of this doth proceed from the want of the solid conviction of the absolute necessity that we stand in of these things for as one said well, strong necessities make strong desires. And also it doth proceed from the want of the consideration of the precious excellencies that are to be had in these things that we ask, the eminency of a thing doth encrease the vigour of our pursuit after it, and maketh us with seeking of it, mount up with wings as eagles over all these difficulties that ly as impediments in our way, ought we not to be emulous of the practice of Nineveh, of whom this is recorded, *That they cryed mightily to God, Jon. 3. 8.* We think many Christians of this generation (because of their woful remissness and coldness of affection in proposing their desires) may be constrained to mourn over all their mournings, and pray over all their prayers.

Now if a Christians heart be the Temple of the holy Ghost, O! how ought he to pray? for it is the diamond which the Apostle puts in the upshot of all the graces of the Spirit, *Eph. 6. 18.* and after which he exhorteth a Christian seriously to pursue. Oh I think it is a mystery that we cannot well take up; but these that are most in the exercise of it, can best resolve it, and take up its precious effect; but believe me, I think it is one of the most dark mysteries that is to be found in the practice of a Christian, except he in whom is all *treasures of wisdom and knowledge*, to unfold this one divine sentence, *pray without ceasing*; it shall alwise remain a mystery to our obedience; it is a question we confess that is sometimes difficult to determine whether some duties of a Christian that are commanded to be done by us, be more mysterious to our understanding to take up the nature of them, and what is commended in the lively and spiritual exercise of such a duty. Or whether they be more mysterious to us in our practice and obedience? We confess, it holdeth not alike

in all things, it being more easie for us to know, then to practice many things: we conceive it holdeth out in some, and even in those things and duties that are most obvious (as we conceive) and that have least of the mysteriousness of the Gospel engraven upon them.

S R M O N II.

I Thess. 5. 17. Pray without ceasing.

**I**T were for our great advantage to be much taken up in the serious and divine consideration of that most sad, but most true saying, *That any are called, but few are chosen*, yea, if there were but one of each twelve that are within this house to day, to whom Christ thus (sadly) should speak, *One of you will betray me*. ought ye not all to be put to an holy inquiry and search, and say unto him, *Master, is it I?* and to be exceeding sorrowful, until that concerning question be determined unto you? how much more ought ye to accomplish a secret and serious search, to know whether or not ye be written among the living in Jerusalem, and have passed from death to life? seeing alas! I think it is more probable, that if precious Christ were to speak to each twelve that are within this house, we are afraid that he should thus (sadly) speak, there are eleven of you that shall betray me, and one shall only pass free. And O that the number of those that are to betray the precious Son of God, were reduced to so few, though indeed these be many.

If he who seeth not as man seeth, who reproveth not after the hearing of the ear, nor after the seeing of the eye, who can reject an Eliab, the more fair in shew and appearance, and can choose a stripling like David, were to give his verdict, and pass his sentence on all of us that are here; ah! upon how many of our foreheads might

been given this dreadful sentence, *Atheists, some, rebels, scharps: soon are weighed in the balance, and are found light; I am afraid that even some ( professors ) who have a form of godliness, and yet have not the power thereof, and are like these painted sepulchres, that are fair without, but within are full of dead mens bones; he shall reject their confidence, and cut off their hopes as a feeders web; Religion that is pure and undefiled is another thing than we take it to be: We must not go to heaven in a bed of Roses. we must strive, and earnestly contend to enter in at the strait gate; And if ye would have a description, and definition of those that are shut out from the presence of the Lord, who are of that wofull number, to whom Tophet is ordained of old, the Psalmist giveth a description of them, *Psalm 14. 4. They call not upon God.* But if we conceive, that this is the description of these that shall be eternally secluded from Gods presence, that they pray not unto God, ye will think that ye are not of that list, for who is so absurd ( says he ) that will not pray to him that is Almighty, and pay that due Homage unto him, who is the Creator of all the ends of the earth.*

But unto such atheists as these, I shall propose these four things, which if you be not able to give a positive answer unto, be perswaded that ye never knew what it is to pray unto God, so as to have your offerings coming up with acceptance upon his holy Altar.

1. Did ye ever know what it was to go to prayer upon an internal principle of love, and the grace of Christ constraining you? are there not many of you, O atheists, who do not know what this means, to have the precious bonds of love constraining and imposing ablesed necessity upon your hearts to converse with God in prayer? did ye ever know what it was to bind your sacrifices to the Horns of the Altar by the cords of love?

2. Did ye ever know what it was by prayer, to attain to more conformity with God, and to crucifie your lusts? there are many, & I may say some professors, to whom this

this is a mystery, through fasting and prayer to crucifie an idol or lust. It were good ye had a holy jealousy over your selves, that you are in the bonds of iniquity, and gall of bitterness. The most part of our mortification is rather by consent than by constraint, our idols do rather go out, than are cast out, or else our idols dieth rather to us, than we die to them; hence it is, that often times after he had famished our gods, we sit down and bemoan our selves over the graves of our idols, and as David lamented over Absalom, so do we over our lusts.

Did ye ever know what it was to distinguish betwixt absence and presence? when did ye meet with such a place which ye might call *Peniel*, that you have seen God face to face? and in another place you might have said, *Here he did turn about the face of his throne and did veil himself with a cloud*, so that I know not where to find him.

I shall in the last place propose this question, which I conceive may not only convince prophane atheists, but also some who have a shew of Religion. Did you ever know what it was to sit down & lament over absence from Christ, and thinke it an importable want? O, where is the exercise of the impatient grace of love now gone? O but Christ may live long in heaven, before the most part of us give him a Visit, I fear he visit us before we visit him.

And now O Atheists, examine your selves by these, and be perswaded, that if ye know not what these things mean, ye are yet Strangers unto the spiritual Exercise of this duty of Prayer, and all your prayers that ever ye have spoken, have been but *as smoke in his nostrils* and *a fire that burneth all the day*. Believe me in this O Men of the World, that in the day when ye shall solemnly appear before God in the *Valley of Decision*, this shall be a great Item of your dittay, that you have prayed so much, or rather that you have profaned his Holiness (which you pretend to love) so much. O that all of us were not almost but altogether perswaded to be Christ-



ans. Seeing Christ doth offer that precious dignity to make us not only Sons, in law to a King, which ought not to seem small in our eyes; but also to make us Kings and Priests unto God, can we refuse such an offer as this? Might he not summon the heavens and the earth, and angels, and our brethren, who are now above, to behold a Wonder? yea, and no doubt, it is a wonder, that any of us should slight such an offer.

Now if any of you would ask at me that question, what is and should be the native exercise of a Christian while he is here below in the land of his exile, & a stranger from his fathers house? Whether he should exercise himself in singing or praying? we answer that prayer is and should be in the main exercise of a Christian while he is here below in the land of exile, & is a stranger from his fathers house, & when the promises are not yet accomplished, nor all the prophecies fulfilled; we confess the exercise of joy and rejoycing in God, ought to be a necessary duty and exercise of a Christian, we may sing the songs of these excellent Musicians and heavenly harpers, that stand upon the Sea of Glass, having harps in their hands. And our songs which is here below, is only different in degree; their songs are of a higher key, and our songs are of a lower key, though we confess they are more expert in that divine art, for we oftentimes spoil our songs in the sinning of them: as likewise they are more constant in that blessed exercise, but alas, we are oftentimes constrained to hang our harps on the willow trees, while we sit by these rivers of Babel: But if we would praise more, we should pray more, and if we did pray more, we should praise more. O! but prayer would furnish us matter of new songs every day; and if we were much in that exercise, we might have that blessed Psalm to sing, *He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto the Lord.* I think a Christian may examine him self by this unerring rule of his growth in grace, he may know it by the exercise of secret prayer: this is the pulse of a

Christian



Christian, by which he may know his constitution, and the slow beatings of the pulse of the Christians of this generation, doth prove this unto us, that Grace is in a remarkable decay; it is groaning with us, *as the groans of a wounded man*. O, but if we were more obedient unto this precious command, *pray without ceasing*, our Grace might be more vigorous, and our bed might be green, and we might be bringing forth fruit, even in our old age.

But now to that which we shall insist mainly upon, in going through this duty and Grace of prayer (beside these things that we spake at the last occasion) viz what are these strong Impediments and Obstructions that do impede and hinder a Christians access unto God in his secret Retirements in prayer? if we were asked at when did we last behold him? we may say that which *Esther* spake to the servants of *Mordecai*, *it is thirty days since I did behold the Kings face*. But alas, our lot of lamentation and defection from God, may ascend to whither pitch, yea, it is many thirty days since we did behold the King, O but we are great Strangers in Heaven, and though we should be eternally so, we could not debate with his Justice.

The first impediment that obstructs a Christians liberty in having access to God in his secret devotions, is that woful and carnal design which he doth propose to himself in the exercise of that duty, we are low in our designs, which makes us low in our enjoyments, this is clear, *James 4. 3.* where there is given as a reason why we do not receive that which we pray for, *we ask amiss, to spend it upon our lusts*. We pray in secret that we may be more fitted to pray when we go abroad, and thereby get applause: hence it is that so much of Christians pursuits are rather taken up in seeking after the ornaments of prayer, than after the grace of Prayer; Rather to pursue after these things that are adorning in it, than these things that are saving in it, and oftentimes the Ministers of the Gospel have that woful end proposed to themselves. How oftentimes

sometimes do our hearts speak that which *Saul* said to *Sa-  
muel* honour me this day before the people and Elders of *Is-  
rael*. And I think this is an evil which Christians may  
easily discern and take up, whether or not they do pro-  
pose themselves as the last & ultimat end of all their de-  
votions? And one that hath this wofull qualification,  
he doth resent and grieve more for his publick strait-  
nings & bonds, than for these which he hath in privat  
Are there not many of us here who will rise up from se-  
cret Prayer, under the undeniable conviction of much  
distance from God, and yet never know what it is to  
have an anxious thought about it? O, when did ab-  
sence from Christ in our secret retirements, make us  
forget to eat our bread. Ah, that sickness of love, whe-  
is it gone? we are sick unto death of imaginary health  
and we wish that that sickness of love were more Epi-  
demick and universal in those days, which were not  
a sickness unto death, but for the glory of God. And in our  
publick straitnings when we converse one with ano-  
ther, how much will we grieve or repine, though we  
confess these are rather the grieving of our pride, than  
of our love: rather Lamentation, because of the  
loss of our reputation, than because of the loss of our ab-  
sence with Christ? one that hath this woful qualifica-  
tion of proposing themselves as the end of their devo-  
tions, they may likewise know it by this, that when they  
are straitned in their publick approaches to God, and  
when others are enlarged, they envy and fret; they are  
rather indued with envy, than a holy emulation; which  
proveth unto us, that we are not great in the Kingdom  
of heaven, because we are not much taken up, how to  
Glorifie God, which hath given such gifts to Men;  
but we sit drown of his wife and wonderful dispensati-  
on. *Tho he hath given to others five Talents, and to us but  
one;* so that oftentimes we are provoked to that  
impious course, as to bind up our talent in a napkin, and  
to dig in the earth and hide our Lords money. Studying  
by that practise to appropriate the estimation of humili-  
ty

ty unto our selves, when we cannot get the estimation of one that is eminent in parts and abilities, which doth oftentimes provoke God to take that from us that we seem to have, and to give to him that hath more so that he may have abundance. One that hath this woful end himself, as the end of all his devotions, may likewise know it by this, that seldom or never doth he go about that exercise of prayer from a principle of love or delight to walk with God, but to attain the expressions of prayer, hence it is, when most part of Christians come abroad, they do rather prove themselves Orators, than Christians, the voice of words is more heard, than the voice of the affections, and these Inexpressible Sighs and Groans of the Spirit.

Ah! the real and spiritual exercise of that duty, it is far gone into decay, there is not one amongst a thousand that doth study earnestly after it. Think ye to pursue and win God by your fair blossoms and flowring Rhetorick, gallantness and fineness of expression? Will not he who is infinite in understanding, laugh at your folly? Are ye to perswade a Man? Are ye not rather to perswade God? Ye may likewise know it by this, whether or not ye propose your selves as the last and ultimat end of all your devotions, and it is when ye have most enlargements and access unto God, in your secret retirements, and ye desire and covet to have manifest Spectators and Auditors, that so they may pass that testimony on you, *that ye are men greatly beloved of God*, that do receive such singular testimonies of his love, and of his respects: but woe be unto you that are such hypocrites, who cover the greenings in the markets, and the upper most rooms at feasts, desiring to be called of men, *Rabbi*: Verily ye shall have your reward: Then he that is first shall be last, and he that is last shall be first. When that proverb shall be taken up over you, *How art thou fallen from Heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning*, when Satan by his tail shall draw all stiering Stars down out of Heaven towards the Earth.

and we think, this woful evil of proposing our selves as the end of our devotions, doth not only obstruct his Grace, but likewise when we attain to it in some measure, it breaks it off.

It is certain that when a Christian hath most nearness with God, and is in a manner, lifted up to the third Heavens, then he doth receive great liberty of expressions, winning to some high and eminent conceptions of God, and some significant expressions of his own misery, then our pride causing us to reflect upon what we have spoken, do much quench our holy flame of zeal and love: We study to have expressions in our memory, that we may express them when we come abroad, rather than affections in the heart: and this hath obstructed many Christians of precious enjoyments, and doth prove this eminently to you, that ye are more taken up with the expressions of your enjoyments, than with the enjoyments themselves.

We confess there are some who are more rude and gross in their carriage who go about this exercise of Prayer, that they may take advantage to sin with more liberty, and with fewer challenges, like that adulterous Woman mentioned in *Prov. 7. 14. 18.* who after she said she had peace offerings with her, and that she had payed her vows; she inferreth this, *That she would go and take her fill of Loves, and solace her self to the morning.* Your Prayers O Atheists, are alwise an abomination in the sight of the Lord, O how much more, when ye bring them with such awicked mind? How will you hide your sins with such a covering: O take heed to your spirits, least ye deal treacherously with God, there are many of us that pray like Saints, but we walk like Devils. Surely one that heard us pray, might prophesie good things of us, but in our life may find our prophesies fail in the accomplishment.

There is a second impediment that obstructs a Christians liberty in the exercise of Prayer in his secret retirements which is that woful formality and indifferency of spirit that we use in the exercise of our secret Prayers,

ers, the most part of us are ignorant, what it is to cry mightily to God, when we are alone, and to wrestle with him, were it until the dawning of the day, till he bless us, that so indeed we may indeed be Princes with God; that by these two hands we lay hold on him, Faith and Love; Love lays hold on the heart of Christ, and Faith lays hold on his Word, and by it detains him in his Galleries. I may speak this to the shame of many of you, that it were to your advantage to be as serious in speaking to God when ye are alone, as ye are serious when ye are in company. A heathen did observe this, and therefore did press it upon all to whom he wrote, that they should beware of woful indifferency: and we confess, this woful indifferency of ours, is but an involving our selves in that Curse, *Cursed be the man that hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing.* O what if precious Christ should propose that unanswerable Challenge to many of us who are here, *Are the consolations of God small to you?* Or is there any secret thing with you, that ye do so little pursue after these things? We confess, our formality and woful indifferency, doth much proceed either from the want of a solid impression of a Deity, before whom we pray, or else from the want of a spiritual Conviction of the absolute necessity of the things that we pray for. Ye Formalists, whose constant practice is to be formal, by your formality ye make your bonds stronger upon your Spirits, and do wreath the yoke of your transgressions round about your necks. These impertinent roving of spirit that we have in the exercise of Prayer, doth no doubt come from this fountain of woful formality that we have in it, *Fowls do with liberty descend upon the Carcases,* when we are formal, and it is only fervency that must drive away these.

The third impediment that obstructs a Christians liberty; we are not much taken up in imploying of the Holy Ghost that must help our infirmities, and must

must breathe upon our withered Spirits, otherwise such dead bones as we are cannot live: Our bodily exercise profiteth little, it is the spirit that quickeneth, as is clear, *John 3: 8*: and certainly, except the north or south wind blow, our spirits cannot flow out: and except the Angel move the water, we cannot step in and be healed: O but that word is a Mystery to our practice, which is in the 20. verse of the Epistle of Jude, and surely, we may be astonished when we read it over, and we may be ashamed that we are so little in the regular practice of it, where this is put in amongst the midst of all the Christians duties, that we should pray in the holy Ghost: and certainly, that duty is required of us, although it be a Mystery, and an unknown thing to the practice of the most part of the Christians of this Generation. I think a Christian that is much in the imployment of the holy Ghost, when he goeth to pray, he is put to an holy *non plus*, so that he knoweth not what he shal say, and is oft times put without any Complement to propose that desire to God, *Lord, teach us what we shall say, for we cannot order our speech before thee, by reason of our darkness.* Think ye not that Peter, James and John had the spirit of Prayer eminently above us all, and yet they were not ashamed to propose that desire to God, *Lord, teach us to pray?* It were for our concernment and advantage, to pray even as tho' ye had never prayed before. I am perswaded of it, that if this exercise of Prayer were so gone about, we should have much more liberty of words, and of expressions than we have. It is certain we must have no confidence in our Gifts and Abilities of Prayer. The Prayers that are penned in heaven, are best heard in heaven. That which the holy Ghost doth dicit (with reverence be it spoken) the Father can best read. The Father can read no Characters of any Petition (to admit it) but which his blessed hands doth Pen.

There is this fourth impediment and obstruction,  
 which



which obstructs a Christians liberty and access to God in his secret retirements and prayers, that we are so little taken up in the employing of Jesus Christ as a Mediator in our approaches unto God. I think it is impossible for a Christian to delight and enjoy himself with God, but through Jesus Christ, who is *that vision of Peace*. O Christians, through what door will ye enter into the *Holiest of all*, if ye enter not through him, even through Jesus Christ, the vail of his flesh? in a manner, he is the door of heaven, and we must enter into heaven through the door. Christ is that great Courtier in heaven, by whom we must have access and admission unto the King. If any person dare adventure to go to Pray without him (*who is that blessed Days-man betwixt God and Sinners*) he comes without his Wedding-garment, and so that question shall be propoed to him, *Friend, how camest thou hither, or rather, O enemy, how camest thou hither without a Wedding-garment?* And be perswaded of it that ye shall remain speechless not opening your mouth.

The fifth impediment and obstruction which obstructs a Christians liberty and access to God in his secret retirements, is the woful intanglements and engagements of hearts that we have to the impertinent vanities and tridles, that we have of this passing World: our hearts are mightily taken up with the perishing and decaying things that are in this life; yea, the most part of our hearts are married to the World, and to the things thereof, and we think, and are perswaded of it, that that doth exceedingly obstruct and mar our liberty and access to God. This Divinity was well known to godly David, *Psalm 66. 18. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my Prayer*, hearing and access, although they be not much different, yet always the last presupposeth the first: and this divinity was also well known unto that blessed Man, that is spoken of in *John 9. 31. and this we know, that God heareth not sinners; but if any man be a worshipper of*



of God, and obeyeth his will, him he beareth. I think those woful and dreadful evils that doth so easily beset us, doth exceedingly hinder and obstruct us to ascend in a spiritual cloud of divine and holy affection unto God; the Souls of the most part of us are divided amongst many, even amongst so many lovers, that it cannot devote and resign it self unto God; every impertinent idol and lust doth claim a right and relation unto the Soul, and then that obstructs a Christians liberty in his secret retirements. O to be more in the exercise of this precious and excellent grace of Faith, whereby we may purifie our selves from all uncleanness of the flesh, and of the spirit, and may be able to persevere holiness in the fear of the Lord. O can it be that such a fountain that such a defiled and corrupt fountain that sends forth only salt water, can send forth any sweet, precious and Soul-refreshing springs of living water? This was a Mystery and a Paradox unto the Apostle James in his Chap. 3. 12. *Can fig trees bear olive berries? Or can the olive tree bear figs? so can no fountain yield salt water and flesh;* And certainly it shal always remain impossible for us to do both good and evil. Would ye know the livery which the Church of Christ must have, and her Members? is it to be clothed with holiness; for, no doubt, that is the robe and garment with which we must enter into the holiest of all: and may not that incite and provock your desires to follow after it, which is so excellent and precious? Believe it, we are not able to tell the worth of it.

There is this sixth impediment which obstructs a Christians Liberty and Access to God in his secret Prayer, and it is that woful resisting and quenching of the Motions of the Spirit, that oftentimes we fall into: hence it is, that when a Christian doth go unto God, he is debarred, and his Prayers is shut out from God, and the reason of it is, because he debarred God before. And this is remarkably clear from the Brides practice, Canticles 5. 2. compared with the following Verses, she

He held Christ at the door, notwithstanding his *Locks were wet with the dew of the Night, and his Hair with the drops of the Morning.* But when she had condescended to open to him, he had withdrawn himself from her. O, who would hold out such a precious Guest? surely it were a more suitable exercise for us, that we should Admire and Wonder, and stand astonished at his low Condescension, that ever he should have condescended so low as to come unto us, rather than to require that marvellous and unsearchable Grace of his towards us, after such a way as many of us so sinfully do.

There is this last impediment that hinders Christians Liberty and Access to God in his secret Prayers, and it is that woful evil of Pride, wherewith we are cloathed so much in our approaches to God, we ought *to bow our heads seven times towards the ground,* when we begin to make our Approaches unto him, even unto him, who is greater than all Kings of the Earth: believe it, if the Grace of Humility were more our exercise in secret Prayer, certainly we should enjoy more of him than we do. This is clear in 1 Peter 5. 7. where he saith, *God giveth Grace to the Humble; but he resisteth the Proud.* And it is likewise clear from *Isaiah 57. 15.* though he be that High and Lofly One, that inhabiteth Eternity, and whose Name is Holy, yet he saith, *I dwell in the High and Holy Place, with him also that is of a humble and contrit Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the humble, and to revive the Heart of the contrit Ones.* And though he be that High and Lofly One, he loveth one that is of a pure and contrit Spirit. O might we not always say, that we are not worthy that thou should even condescend so far, *as to come under our Roof?* Modesty and Reverence might make us Admire such wonderful and precious Visits; whence is it, saith *Elizabeth, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?* Much more may we say, whence is it that the Lord himself should come to us? We challenge

may challenge our selves, that our enjoyments of God are not more than they are.

Now we shall speak, Secondly, a litle to you (before we shut up our discourse) how a Christian may be helped after his Enjoyments in Prayer (and after he hath been admitted to Taste of that pure River, that flows out from beneath the Throne of GOD) to rest in his Love to Christ, and not stir him up, nor awake him, before he please. We confess, it is as much difficulty (if not more) to maintain Communion with God, when it is gained, as to gain it when it is lost. Oh, but Satan hath oftentimes catched much Advantage over the People of God, after their Enlargements. When was it that John fell down to Worship the Angel? was it not when he had seen the Bride, the Lambs wife adorned? as is clear, Revel 19. 10. compared with the proceeding Verses: and it is clear again from Johns practice, Revelation 20. 9. compared with the foregoing words: and when was it that the Disciples did Rave, not knowing what they spake? was it not when they were on Mount Tabor, and did see the fashion of his Face change before him? Matthew 17. 2, 4, 6. Though we confess, we must give an indulgence unto that, it was nothing but the Ravings of Holy Love that made them to do so, which, alas, is not much heard in these days; We Rave in more impertinent manner. And we think a Christian after his Enjoyments and Enlargement, ought especially to stand on his watch, and to pray lest he enter into Temptation? For the Stroke he doth receive after Enjoyments and Enlargements, is one of the most discouraging Strokes, and most noxious, that he meeteth with; it hath been the occasion of much Unbelief, and hath made his own to mourn, not only over the Foundation, but also, even to raze it down: arguing thus with themselves, if that when Christ was present with them, upon whom their strength was laid, they were led Captive unto their Lusts, Romans 7. 23.

How much more shal they be led Captive with them, when Christ shal be absent and away: They have been put to draw that Conclusion, *One day shall I fall by the hand of some of mine enemies*. We should guard against such a stroke, because it doth always almost make the Christian call in question the reality of his enjoyments. It is hard for a Christian to receive a stroke by the hand of his iniquities after enlargements, and not presently to call in question the reality of them; yea more to call in question his estate in grace, for they do often debate with themselves, *if it had been he, who visited me, would he not have enabled me to sing a new song of triumph over my lusts*. And also ye would guard against it, because it is one of the most dishonourable indignities and affronts that can be put upon precious Christ; and if there were no more to provock you to guard against it, may it not be sufficient unto you, that that stroke which ye have received by your iniquities, after your enlargements and enjoyments of God, if it be by your own consent (believe it, and be perswaded of it) that in a manner, it saith this much unto you, that ye have preferred an idol and lust even to Jesus Christ; We think the Jews preferring Barabbas before Christ, when the crown of thorns was upon his head; and when he was spitted upon, and buffeted, is it not such an indignity and disgrace that ye put upon him, when ye prefer your lusts and idols unto him, even when he is appearing with a Crown of Glory and Majesty unto you, and a robe of righteousness and of joy? O dare ye even in his presence prefer any thing before him? Might not Angels and the souls of just men made now perfect, and all that are round about the Throne, might not they all take up that lamentation over you, *Do you thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?* And we think there are these three woful evils that readily befalls a Christian after enlargements and enjoyment that he meets with.

Those

There is this first evil of security, *Cant. 5. 2.* compared with the first verse, where Christ when was come into his garden, *had gathered his myrror with his spices, and had eaten his honeycomb with his honey, and had drunken his wine with his milk;* And yet for all these enjoyments the Spouse was sleeping: As likewise in *Zech. 4. 1.* compared with the preceeding Chapter, where the Prophet fell asleep after his enjoyments, *until the Angel came and awaked him.* Ah, we readily sleep in the bed of love! And that hath impeded many excellent visits we might have. O what a visit was that of the Spouse, *Cant. 5. 2.* we may question whether ever she got such an one while she was here below.

And secondly that woful evil of pride, as is certainly presupposed in *2 Cor. 12. 7.* where, *lest Paul should be exalted above measure, through the abundance of revelations, there is a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him.* O, but it is a dangerous exercise for a Christian to search his own glory. We confess we do not search to strengthen our confidence, or our love; but to add oyl to that fire of pride in our reflections upon our selves: *The wind doth lift us up upon its wings, and we ride upon it till our substance be dissolved.*

And there is this third evil which is not so obvious, but, no doubt, doth oftentimes befall the Christian, and that is self-love, which oftentimes he falleth into after his enjoyments, and this evil doth certainly break off many of our enjoyments, to the disadvantage of the Christian, and hinders him to exercise himself in the grace of true love, which always we ought to be keeping in exercise, because it is that oyl by which our chariot-wheels must move swifter, and be as the chariots of *Amminadab.*

Now for that which we proposed, viz. how a Christian may be helped to keep his enjoyments which he hath attained to by Prayer? We shall only propose these two things, 1. Be much in the exercise of watchfulness after your enlargements, *that ye enter not into temptation.*

tion. And 2. Be much in the exercise of humility, that when grace lifts you up, you may not lift up your selyes. But a Christian that walketh always with his feet towards the earth, and doth never mount an hand-broad above it, he walketh most safely. I know nothing to keep your enjoyments in life, and to keep you from soares in your enjoyment so much, as the grace of humility: but we need not insist long in telling you how ye shal maintain your enjoyments; there are, alas, so few of them in these days: When were ye in Heaven? or when was Heaven brought down to you, in a manner. If the most part of us did now behold Christ, we would not know him, it is so long since we saw him. O precious Christ, how much is he undervalued in these days? I think if such a supposition as this were possible, that if Christ would go down to the pit of those damned persons that are reserved in everlasting chains, and preach that Doctrine unto them, *Here am I, receive me, and ye shall obtain life*; we question whether obedience or admiration would be more their exercise: Would they not bind that command as a chain of gold about their neck? But know it, ye that refuse him now, ere long he shal refuse. Oh, when shal that precious promise that is in Zech. 8. 23. be accomplished, *And the inhabitants of one City shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of Hosts: I will go also*: Or as the word may be rendered, *continually*. O! When shal such a voice be heard in the City of Glasgow? Seing our Brethren above sing without ceasing, let us pray without ceasing: And to you that prays, I shal say this word, ye that fervently pray without ceasing; it is not long before ye shal sing without ceasing, and without all interruption. of



## SERMON III.

Thess. 5. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

**R**eal godliness is so entire and undivided a thing, and the parts of it are so inseparably knit, and fin-  
 ked one with another, and cannot be parted, that it is  
 like *Christs coat that was without seam, that it could not  
 be divided*; and except the whole fall to us by divine  
 lot, we can have no part nor portion in it; and were  
 this more solidly believed and imprinted upon our  
 hearts, the inseparable connexion and near cogniti-  
 on that is amongst all the graces of the Spirit, we  
 should not be so partial and divided in our pursuits af-  
 ter them, *separating those things which he hath joined  
 together*, which oftentimes is the occasion that our in-  
 tractable and deformity doth appear; neither should we  
 (if this were believed) be so soon satisfied with our at-  
 tainments; (but in a manner) should be intertaining  
 an holy oblivion and forgetfulness of all that we have  
 purchased, to put by our hand, and should be passing  
 forward to those things that are before, *as once we attain  
 to that stature of one in Christ*. And till grace have its  
 perfect work, and want nothing, we can never be con-  
 stant. Amongst all the graces of the Spirit, which a  
 Christian ought vigorously to pursue after, this grace  
 of Prayer is not amongst the least: it is that which kee-  
 peth all the graces of a Christian in life and vigour,  
*and maketh us fat and flourishing, and bringeth forth fruit  
 in our old age*: and except the Christians be planted by  
 that Wall, his branches will never climb over the  
 Wall; who is the Christian that groweth like a palm  
 tree, and doth flourish as the Cedar in Lebanon? It is not  
 he that is planted in the house of the Lord, which is a  
 house of prayer: And we conceive that the fundamental  
 cause why grace, and the real exercise of godliness is  
 under



under such a woful and remarkable decay in these days, it is want of obedience unto this great Commandment, *Pray without ceasing.* Were we dwelling *fourty days* in the *Mount Sion* with God, our faces should shine, and we should be constrained to cast a veil over them. Were we intertaining a holy and divine correspondency with Heaven by this Messenger of Prayer, we might by tasting of the first fruits of that Land afar off. Prayer is one of these faithful Messengers and Spies which a Christian sends forth to view the promised Land, and which always doth bring up a good report upon that excellent and glorious Land. O when went ye to the brook *Ephraim* by the exercise of Prayer, and did cut down a branch with a cluster of grapes, and were admitted to behold that Land, which is the glory of all Lands; in the midst of which doth grow *that tree of life* which bears *twelve manner of fruits every year*. O what a land suppose you it to be, wherein are *twelve harvests every year*? Alas, we are straitned in our desires, which makes us straitned in our enjoyments. May not we blush and be ashamed, that the men of the world should enlarge their desires as hell and as death, and shal cry, *Give, give,* after these passing and transient vanities of the World, and that Christians should not be provoked to enlarge their desires as Heaven, and as the *land by the sea shore*, after these things that are most high and divine in their nature and are more fruitful, and advantagious in their enjoyments? we think ignorance is the cause of our slow pursuit after these things, and ignorance in men of the world is the occasion of their swift and vigorous pursuit after these endless and passing vanities of this vain and transient world.

We did at the last occasion (speaking upon these words) speak somewhat to that which doth obstruct a Christians liberty in his secret retirements and conversing with God, so that the door of access is oftentimes shut upon him, and he hath not the dignity conferred upon him to enter into the *boldest of all*. We

We spake likewise to that which was the best and most compendious way to maintain fellowship and communion with God after once it is attained, that when our hearts are enlarged, we may keep our spirit in a tender and spiritual frame; we shal now in the next place speak a little to you, how a Christian may be helped to know the reality of his enjoyments, whether they be delusions, yea, or not; or tokens and significations of the Lords special and singular respect: and before we speak of that, we shal premise these two things.

First, That a man which hath but a common work of the Spirit, and hath never been indued with real and saving Grace, he may attain to many flashes of the Spirit, and some tastings of the powers of the world to come, as likewise to the receiving of the Word of the Gospel with joy, as is clear from *Heb. 6. 5.* and *Mat. 13. 20.* He may have many things that looks like the most heavenly and spiritual enjoyments of a Christian, but we conceive that the enjoyments of these that have but a common work of the Spirit, they are not of such a measure and degree, as the enjoyments of the sincere Christian: hence they are called in *Heb. 6. 5.* but a tasting; the word is sometimes used for such a tasting, as when one goeth to a Merchant to buy Liquor, he doth receive somewhat to taste, to teach him to buy, but that is far from the word which is in *Psal. 26. 8.* *They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fullness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.* And from that word which is in *Can. 5. 1.* *Eat and drink abundantly, O beloved.* We conceive likewise, that their enlargements and enjoyments which they have, the strength and vigor of their corruptions are not much abated thereby; neither is conformity with God attained: hence is that word, *Mat. 13. 20.* *Tho' they received the word with joy yet the thorns (which we do understand to be corruptions) they do grow without any opposition; and they*

that never knew what it was to have the strength and vigor of their lusts abated by their enjoyments they have but a common work of the Spirit. The hypocrites enlargements are rather in publick, and in their conversings one with another, than in their secret retirements: and those enjoyments that they have when they converse one with another, they do rather joy and rejoyce because of applause that they have by such enlargements, and of a reputation of having familiarity and intimateness with God, rather than for the enjoyments themselves, and that dignity and honour hath been conferred upon them to taste some of that river that flows from beneath the Throne of God; we conceive likewise, that in all their enjoyments that they have, they do not much study and endeavour to guard against all obstructions and impediments that may stir up Christ, and awake him before he please; they can give their hearts a latitude to rove abroad after impertinent vanities, yea presently after the seeming access and communion with God, as likewise their desires to the duty of Prayer, and Christian duties is not much increased by their enlargements which they receive being strangers, in that word which is in *Prov. 10. 23. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, &c.*

That which secondly we shal speak of, (before we come to speak how a Christian may be helped to know the reality of his enjoyments) is this, that there is an enlargement of gifts, which is far from the enlargement of the spirit of grace. There may be much liberty of words and of expressions, where there is not much liberty of affections. We think that it is a frequent delusion amongst his own, that they conceive their liberty of their expression of themselves in Prayer, is enlargement: but we are perswaded of this, that there may be much of this, and not much of the spirit, and of the grace of prayer (as we told before) The spirit of prayer is sometimes an impediment to words, so that a Christian which hath much of that may have least of volubility and of expression, But

But first, (these enjoyments that are real) which indeed are significations of his love and respect to you, they do exceedingly move and humble the Christian, and causeth him to walle low in his own estimation; Hence is that word, 2 Sam. 7. 18, 19. where David being under such a load of love, that (in a manner) he is forced to sit down and cannot stand; he doth subjoyn that expression, *Who am I, O Lord? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?* and also in Job 42. 5, 6. where that enjoyment which Job had of God, is to see him with the seeing of the eye (a sight was so frequent in those days) He subjoyns a strange inference from so divine promises, *Therefore I abhor my self in dust and ashes.* And in Hsa. 6. 5. compare with the preceeding verses, where Isaiah from that clear discovery of God, as to see him in his Temple, he is constrained to cry forth, *Wo is me, I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.* It were our advantage, that when we are lifted up to the third Heavens, were it to hear words that are unspeakable, yet to cover our upper lip, and cry, *Unclean, unclean;* we ought always to sit nearer the dust, the more that grace exalt us to Heaven: and we conceive that it is a most excellent way to keep our selves in life after our enjoyments, to be walking humbly with God, and to know that the root beareth us, and not we the root, Christian enlargements that are real, hath this effect upon them, it doth provock to a more constant exercise in pursuing after God, their diligence is enlarged when they are enlarged: Hence is that word, Psal. 116. 2. *Because God hath inclined his heart unto me* (which presupposeth access) *therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.* It is certain, that if our enjoyments be real, they will be well improved, for this is a sweet fruit which doth always accompany them.

(2.) Ye may likewise know the reality of your enjoyments by your endeavours to remove all impediments and obstructions that may interrupt your fellowship

and correspondence with God, according to that word, Cant. 3. 5. When after the Church did behold him who had been so long absent, she is put to this, I charge you O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roses and by the bindes of the field, that ye stir me up nor awake my beloved till he please. I conceive this is one of the most certain demonstrations of the reality of enjoyments, when ye are put to more carefulness and solicitude to have all things taken out of the way that may provoke him to go away, and quench his holy Spirit O! but it is a marvelous undervaluing of the grace of Jesus Christ to take such a latitude to our selves after we have been enlarged.

3. Ye may likewise know the reality of your enjoyments by this, when ye do attain conformity with God by your enjoyments: hence is that word, 2 Cor. 3. 18. *whom beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord.* Our corruptions must be abated, if we would prove the reality of our enjoyments: for if we give them that compleat latitude which they have had before, we have reason to be suspicious and jealous over our selves: and we shall say this, do not rest upon all your enjoyments that ye have here within time, as satisfactory, but let them rather provoke your appetite, than suffice your desires and longings. That holy man David knew of no beginning of satisfaction, but when eternity should come according to that word, Psal. 17. 15. *When I wake, (that is in the blessed morning of the resurrection) then shall I be satisfied with thy likeness.* Did David never find satisfaction here below; All that he did receive was but the streams that did flow from that immense and profound fountain and sea of love, He did drink but of the brook, while he was here below; but when he was above, he was drowned in that immense sea of love, and there was abundantly satisfied. O let the streams lead you to the fountain, and when

ye are win there, ye may sit down and get your share of everlasting praise: these are but of *the valley of Achor*, which must be a *door of hope*, none have more entire and full enjoyment of him.

That which thirdly we shall speak to, shall be those advantages which a Christian may have by the exercise of Prayer we may say this unto you, *come and see*, can best resolve the question? for those spiritual advantages which a Christian may have in the real and spiritual discharge of this duty, that they are better felt nor told. It is impossible sometimes for a Christian to make language of these precious and excellent things that he meets with in sincere and serious prayer.

The first advantage, it doth keep all the graces of the spirit eminently in exercise, it maketh them vigorous and green; it keeps the grace of love most lively, for one that is much in the exercise of prayer, he doth receive so many notable discoveries and manifestations of the sweetness and glory of God, and most rich participations of that unspeakable delight which is to be found in him, that he is constrained to cry forth, *who would not love him who is the King of Saints!* O, when met ye with such an enjoyment of God in prayer, as this. Did ye conceive that ye were clothed with an impossibility to love him too much? Or to love him as he ought to be loved? And when did ye conceive that it was an absurd opinion, that he could be loved too much? Hence these two are conjoynd together, *Rejoice evermore, and Pray without ceasing*. And what is Joy, but a fruit of love, or rather an immense measure of Love? We confess, it is a question that is difficult to determine, whether prayer or Faith doth keep up Love most in exercise? We think love (whose Foundation is upon Sense) is most kept in exercise by Prayer: Hence it is, when we are straitned in the exercise of that Duty; and when he turns about the Face of his Throne, then love begins to languish and decay, and then that excellent grace of Faith doth step



in, and speak thus to love: wait on G O D, for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my Countenance and my God. Faith can Read Love in his Heart, when Sense cannot Read Love in his Hands, nor in his Face but when he seemeth to frown, or to strike, Faith can make such a Noble Exposition on such a Dispensation; I know the thoughts of her Heart, thy are Thoughts of Peace, and not of War, to give me an expected end.

Prayer doth likewise keep the Grace of Mortification eminently in exercise; Would ye know what is the reason that our corruptions do sing so many Songs of Triumph over us, and we are so much led Captive by them according to their Will? Is not the want of the exercise of secret Prayer, and that we are not much taken up in the imploying of the Angel that must bind the old Serpent, the Devil, as is mentioned, Rev. 20. 1. that hath the great Chain in his hand. Hence Paul when his Corruptions were awaked and stirring within him, he knew no Weapon so suitable for them as Prayer, as is clear from 2 Cor. 12. 7. 8. where the Messenger of Satan was sent to buffet him, it is said, that he besought the Lord thrice, that this might depart from him. And our blessed Lord Jesus (speaking of the casting out of a Devil) he saith, Matth. 17. 21. This kind goeth not out, but by Fasting and Prayer. It is no wonder that oftentimes we are led Captive by our own iniquities and our Lusts & Corruptions mocking at our Profession, and scorning such weak and feeble Builders, as we are, say to us, can such feeble Jews as these are, build such stately and glorious buildings in one day? but ye who are much in the exercise of this duty, and who to your own apprehensions do not receive much victory over your Lusts, which maketh you oftentimes cry forth, It is in vain for us to seek the Almighty, and what profit is there that I pray unto him? We confess, the small Success that a Christian hath, when he doth discharge the duty of prayer



doth sometimes constrain him to draw that Conclusion *I will pray no more* ) We think the small victory that ye obtain over your lusts, and the little increase in the Work of Mortification, may proceed from the want of that divine fervency, and holy Fervour that ye ought to have in your proposing your desire unto God the effectual fervent prayer of the Righteous availeth much as *James* saith, Chap 5. 26. If he want Fervency in proposing our desires unto God, it is no wonder, that we want Success, or likewise, it may proceed from our want of Faith, our Misbelief giving the return of our prayers before we begin to pray, and saying this unto us, *though we call he will not Answer*; but as *James* saith, Chap 5. 19. *The prayer of Faith may save you who are sick, and may raise you up, for whatsoever ye ask in prayer believing ye shall receive it.* And it doth sometimes proceed from the love and great respect that God hath to you, desiring that your Wounds may be alwise bleeding, so that you may alwise keep about his Throne. Is it not known, that if our necessities were away, we should abridge and mince much of our secret Devotions to God? In a manner Necessity is that Chain whereby God binds the Feet of his own to his Throne, he desireth not that they should be away, and therefore they halt, so that they may rely on his Strength to bear them.

Prayer doth likewise keep the Grace of Patience (under our most sad and crushing Dispensations) eminent ly in exercise, would ye know the most compendious, way to make you to possess your Souls in patience, under great Troubles? Then be much in the exercise of the Grace of Prayer; Hence is that Word, *James* 5. 13. *If any Man be afflicted, let him pray, &c* And what made *Paul* and *Silas* to sing in the Prison, and so patiently to endure the Cross? was it not this, that they were praying at Midnight *Acts* 16. 25. Certainly one that hath attained to much Divine Submission, and holy Enjoyments in the beginning of their Cross they

they have been much in the exercise of Prayer. Did ye never know (any of you) what such a thing as this meant, that going to Complain of your Anxiety to God, you have been constrained to forget them, & begin to Bless and Praise him, because he hath stopp'd the Mouth of your Complaints, and hath put a more Divine and Heavenly Exercise in your Hand. This the Psalmist did attain to in Psalm 89. where the Scope of the Psalm will bear, that he was going to Complain of the Misery of the Church and of himself yet before ever he began to propound a complaint to God, he spent to the 38. Verse in praising of him. Sometimes Christians have been constrained to cry forth, it is better to be in the house of Mourning, than in the house of Mirth: and to resolve not to fret to be put in a fiery Furnace, but seven times more than ordinary. If they have in the Furnace, one like the Son of God to walk with them.

Prayer doth likewise keep the grace of Faith eminently in Exercise. Or but Faith (which is one of the Mysteries of Godliness) doth much languish and decay in us through the want of Prayer. It is impossible for a Christian to believe except he be much in the Exercise of Prayer; We may maintain a vain hope and persuasion, but the Spiritual Exercise of Faith cannot be kept in Life without the Holy Exercise of Prayer. Hence it is that Prayer, when Faith is beginning to decay, doth go to God, and cry forth, Lord I believe, help my unbelief. And we conceive there are those three grounds and Golden Pillars of Faith, on which it doth lean, which Prayer doth oftentimes administer and give unto it. First, There is that golden Foundation, The faithfulness of God, which Prayer doth abundantly make evident to the Christian. Hence when a Christian doth pray according to promise, and doth receive a return of his Prayer, he doth receive a Demonstration of the Faithfulness of God, which is a Pillar on which Faith doth lean.

Prayer doth likewise give unto Faith this second Pillar, which is the Evidence and Demonstration of the Goodness of God. O! but one that is much taken up in the Exercise of the Grace of Prayer, what large and eminent Discoveries of God doth he receive, he oftentimes disappoints their Fears, and overcomes their hopes and Expectations, he doth not regulate our Enjoyments according to our desire, but he doth regulate them according to that Divine and most Blessed Rule, his own good Will and Pleasure, and O blessed are we in this that it is so! And thirdly, Prayer doth likewise furnish to Faith, Experience, which is a pillar on which Faith must lean; That which maketh the Christian to have so small Experience is want of the serious and constant Exercise of Prayer. O, but when he frowneth, we might have many things to support our selves, if we were much in the serious Exercise of this Duty of Prayer. And truly if we had these three Pillars, our Prayer would not return empty.

Now the second Advantage that a Christian doth Reap by the Exercise of Prayer, is, he is admitted by this Duty to most intimate and familiar Correspondence with God: Did ye never know what it was to behold him who is invisible in the exercise of this duty Did ye never know what these large and heavenly Communications of his Love do mean? Prayer is that divine Channel through which that River of Consolation (that maketh glade the City of God) doth run, When was it that *Cornelius* did see a man standing in white Apparel! was it not when he was praying, and when was it that *Daniel* did meet with the Angel? was it not when he was in the Exercise of Prayer, and offering up his evening Oblation to God! O for Communion and Fellowship with God. (which is so rare and singular in these days) were the sweetness of it believed we should be more frequent and constant in the pursuit of it. I confess & wonder, that we are not put to de-

late oftentimes, whether there be such a thing as Communion and Fellowship with him, we do so little enjoy it: what happiness, O beloved of the Lord, if I dare call you) have ye, which doth so much satisfie you, that when your eternal happiness is clearly holden forth before your Face, yet do so much undervalue it? Surely this perswasion cometh not from him who hath called you. I think, if Angels and the Soules of just men now made perfect (if I may so speak) if they were admitted to behold that wonderful undervaluing of Communion and Fellowship with G O D, that is amongst the Christians of this Generation; O, how might they stand and wonder at us? They would think it a Paradox and Mystery, to behold any undervaluing of him, who can never be valued. Would we not Blush and be ashamed, if he should embrace you, ye that have so much undervalued him? I know no sin that a Christian shall be so much ashamed of, when he shall behold that Noble Plant of Renown, as the low and undervaluing Conceptions and Apprehensions that he hath had of him. If in Heaven there were a multitude for us to pray, we should pray that Prayer (when first our Feet shall stand within the Threshold of the Door of our everlasting Rest) *Pardon us for undervaluing of thee, O precious Christ.*

The third Advantage which a Christian hath in the Exercise of Prayer, is this, it is that Duty by which we must attain to the Accomplishment of the promises, must attain to the accomplishment of the promises. Though God be most free in giving of the promises; yet he will be suppliated for the accomplishing of them, th s is clear in *Ezek. 36. 47.* where in the preceeding words, there is named and holden forth large and precious promises. yet he subjoyneth, *Thus saith the Lord God, I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them.* &c. This is likewise clear, *1 Sam. 7. 27.* where David receiving the pro

mise that his House should be established for ever, & that the Messiah should come out of his loins (according to the flesh) he maketh that sweet fruit of it: *Therefore hath thy Servant found in his heart to pray this prayer unto thee* is not this a mystery to turn over your promises into prayer, and your prayers into songs of praise? It is no wonder that we oftentimes complain *that his Word doth fail for evermore*, because ye are not much in the exercise of that duty, which must bring the accomplishment of these things that he hath promised.

The fourth and last advantage that a Christian doth receive by the exercise of prayer, it is the most compendious and excellent way to resist temptations that assault us. We spake before of mortifying corruptions, when once they have seized upon us, and that is a notable way to mortifie them by prayer: this is likewise an advantage, that when temptations begin to assault us; then we should go to our knees for relief, and I conceive, if a messenger of Satan were sent to buffet us, we might be constrained to *pray without ceasing*. Hence Jesus Christ, who knew what was the best and most effectual remedy to resist temptations, he giveth this remedy of Prayer, *Mat. 26, 41. Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation:*

Now we shall shut up our discourse, by speaking a little to the last thing we intended to speak of at this occasion, and it is how a Christian may be helped to walk suitably as he ought, under his spiritual Bonds & strains. We confess, it is one of the most hard difficult tasks in Christianity, for a person to walk with divine submission under his publick bonds, that when God (in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom) hath thought fit to draw a vail over his face, to subscribe that truth *He hath done all things well*, we confess God hath these precious designs in such a dispensation, as that he may first hide pride from our eyes, and that we may be taught to walk humbly with him. O, but if we were always enlarged in our publick conversing one with another

how

How would we esteem of our selves above measure; and begin to undervalue these persons that are not thus kindly dealt with by God? Hence it is that he always mixeth our wine with our water; he knoweth that the pouring in of such precious liquor, these bruckle vessels of ours could not contain it.

He hath this design likewise in such a dispensation that we may be put to the sweet exercise of the grace of prayer; in a word, that we may be constant and serious in that duty. We conceive, if some liberty of words and enlargements in publick were granted, we would abridge and come short in our privat devotions. It is the great scope and main drift of some to seem great in the Kingdom of Heaven amongst men, though they be least in the estimation of Christ, *who is that faithful and true witness.*

And there is this design likewise in such a dispensation, and it is that we may be convinced of our folly, and of the atheism, and pride of our hearts, that we can rise up from secret prayer, and yet never have any anxious thoughts about it; but in our publick straits and bonds. O! how can we mourn and repine, and we confess, we think these repinings doth rather proceed from this, that we think that gourd of worldly applause is now beginning to wither over us, and therefore we cry forth, *It is better for us to die than live,* than from this, *Want of the presence of Jesus Christ, and the participation of his sweetness;* which we may most strongly convince you of by this, is it not sometimes so with you, that under your publick bonds, when ye have been most remarkably straitned within your selves, yet if your hearts have not conceived evil of you, but have testified their satisfaction; doth not your sorrow then decay, and there is no more repining thereafter?

Now we think the best and most compendious way for a Christian to bear such a dispensation (as to attain to a divine submission to Christ in all things, and to leave our complaints upon our selves) is this, We



should study much the vanity of our popular applause, what an empty and transient thing is it. I confess I would with no greater misery to any than to seek and to have it. We think it misery enough to have it. But certainly they walk safest and most securest that care not for it. Hence a Heathen said well to this purpose. *Qui bene latet, bene vivit*: He that larks well, lives well. I would likewise have you much taken up in the consideration how ye have great disadvantage by your repinings and murmurings which ye have against his dispensations, in straitning you in publick. O Christians, do not your repinings incapacitate and indispose you for the going about the exercise of secret prayer? Doth not your repinings under your publick bonds, make your Bonds strong upon your spirits? I confess, a Christian may contract and draw on more fetters and bonds by one hours repining against such dispensations, than he is able to shake off for many days: and when ye are repining against such dispensations, that ye have met with, doth not your lusts and corruptions stir and awake within you? Surely they then prevail, as we may say, *nullo contradicente*, nothing in opposition against them to our apprehension.

We would also say this to you, that ye may attain to a divine and holy submission to such a dispensation as this, ye would be much in the consideration from what fountain your repinings and murmurings doth proceed, what is the rise and original of them and from which they spring? Is it not rather from a principle of pride, than from a principle of love to, and delight in God; from a principle of self estimation rather than from a principle of longing for Jesus Christ, and sorrow for his withdrawing himself from you (the evil of *Diotrephes* desiring the pre-eminence amongst the Brethren) it is frequent amongst us, coveting to be as one said, *Aut Caesar aut nihil*. We desire either to be singular and matchless, or else



esse to be nothing. We confess, if a Christian di-  
niously ponder these things, and meditat upon them,  
certainly he might blush, and be ashamed of his own  
folly; he might cover his face with confusion, and not  
dare to look up.

But however, we would desire you (even you) that  
in some reality and sincerity of heart, have gone a-  
bout this most precious, and most blessed exercise of  
the grace of prayer, that ye may now begin to renew  
your diligence, and to add to your diligence, Faith, and  
to your Faith, Vertue, and to comfort your selves with  
this, that there is an everlasting rest prepared for you  
in heaven above, which is not like the feast of *Ahasuerus*  
*that lasted for an hundred and fourscore four days*; but  
this blessed feast shal last throughout all the ages of  
long and endless eternity. Believe it, it shal be a bles-  
sed and everlasting feast, it shal be an everlasting feast  
of love. It shal be a feast that shal not be capable of  
any period nor end, nor yet shal know of any loath-  
ing. There is no satiety, neither any loathing in hea-  
ven. And, O, may not this comfort you in your jour-  
ney, and incite and proveck your desires to follow af-  
ter him, who is altogether desirable, and altogether  
lovely, and *that bright and morning star*.

And likewise I would say this to you, even to you  
who are Atheists and Strangers to this precious exercise  
of the duty of prayer; I think it were compleat misery  
to ydu, if there were no more, but that ye are stran-  
gers to it, even to the exercise of this duty of prayer:  
for we think the exercise of godliness, it is a reward to  
it self, as we may say that word, *Piscus sibi primum*.  
It is such an inconceivable and excellent a thing, that  
it is a reward to them whofoever have it: And, O! will  
not your hearts be prevailed with, to fall in love with  
such a rare and excellent exercise, even with the exer-  
cise of godliness, which we conceive is *able for all*  
*things*? And, O will ye make it your study to pray to  
God, and to be in the exercise of Godliness, without  
which

which ye shal never see God; without which ye shal never be admitted to behold him (the beholding of whom is the exercise of all the saints, and of all the souls of just men now made perfect, and of all those precious thousands that are now about his glorious Throne) and without the exercise of which, these feet of yours shal never be admitted to stand within the blessed gates of that precious City, even the City of the New Jerusalem, where all the redeemed of the Lord are; and without the exercise of which, ye shal be eternally and undoubtedly undone. If ye want godliness, ye shal undergo the pains of hell, and the torments of that lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and the day is coming when that curse (that sad curse) shal be sadly accomplished upon you, which is in Dent. 28. 34. *Thou shalt be made mad, for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt behold, and when the Lord shall smite thee with an evil that thou canst not be healed of, even from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head, and thou shalt become an astonishment, and a proverb unto all nations whithersoever the Lord shall carry thee, and thou shalt be smitten before thine enemies: Thou shalt go out one way against them, and thou shalt flee seven ways before them: and thy carcase shall be meat unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field, and none shall fray them away; and all these things shall come upon thee till thou be destroyed.*

O Atheists, what a terrible and dreadful sight shal it be, when ye shal behold those black and hideous everlasting chains, that shal once be wreathed about your cursed necks. O! to be thinking that ere long ye are to dwell and take up your everlasting prison, out of which there is no redemption again; and the door of the prison house is sealed with the seal of the King, which is an unchangeable and unalterable decree. Oh! if the apprehensions and thoughts of this could once praveck and stir you up to pity your own precious and immortal souls, (with which there is no exchange) Oh, what a woful

woful and marvellous stupidity and hardness of heart hath overtaken the people of this present generation, that go to hell with as much delight and ease, as if they were going to heaven? Oh! that your spirits were once wakened from your security, that ye might perceive the woful and miserable condition that ye are lying under. O Christians, what are ye resolved to do? Are ye not afraid that ye shall be be-nighted with your work. Oh, that the sufferings of these pains first resolve you, and clear you of the sadness and inextricable sorrows that are in that bottomless pit; now to him who is that blessed Master of Assemblies, who can fix these words as nails in your hearts, and who can rove them therein, to his blessed and holy Name we desire to give praise.

# SERMON IV.

1 Thess. 5. 17. *Pray without ceasing.*

**W**E desire to commend the blessed and precious estate of those that are now exalted above the reach of this blessed exercise, and who have now made a blessed and precious exchange, that instead of praying without ceasing, they are now praising without ceasing. And, O beloved of the Lord, (if we so may call you) whither is that blessedness gone which you did speak of, *the enjoyment and fruition of Christ*, so that if he would have required it of you, you would have plucked out your right eyes, and given them to him? Or is he become less precious, that your respects to him are so much impaired? Was it not once your divine and blessed lot, that ye could not have lived one day without the enjoyment of him, in whose face your eternal blessedness doth ly? O, but absence and estrangement from him is thought a dispensable want

went in these days, and that which is the ground of the exhortation, is, that ye are so little in giving obedience unto his blessed and precious command, *pray without ceasing.* Yea, if the stones and walls of this house, and if the rafters thereof could speak, they might utter this complaint upon many inhabitants of this City, *that they do not watch unto prayer,* and are not exercising themselves in the entertaining a divine and precious correspondence with heaven. Oh! whither is the exercise of that precious duty of prayer gone? O! how independent are we in our talk with God? O! when did you taste so much of his sweetness, that when ye did reflect upon it, ye were forced to say, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he spake with us?* When did ye cast an indissoluble knot of love upon your heads, which ye hoped eternally could not loose, nor dissolve? I wonder that this is not a question which we do not more debate, how such undervaluers of communion and fellowship with God here below (who can live many days without seeing the sun or stars, without beholding of him) can walk with such woful contentment? O! can such a delusion overtake you as this, that ye can reign as kings without Christ, and be rich and full without his fulness? It were, no doubt, the spread advantage of a Christian, to be retiring from all things that are here below; and to be enclosing himself in a sconce, in a blessed and divine contemplation of that invisible Majesty, and to have our souls united to him by a threefold cord which is not easily broken.

But now to come to the words, the next thing which we intend to speak to from this, is, to know what is the most commendable way to keep your souls in life, and to have them flourishing as a watered garden in the exercise of prayer, we shall say these four things unto you.

First be much in the exercise of the grace of fear when ye go to pray, that ye may have high and reverent

rent apprehensions of that glorious and terrible Majesty before whom ye pray: there is a precious promise for this in *Isa. 60. 1. Thou shalt fear and be enlarged, &c.* O! but our Atheism (and our having that inscription engraven on all our desires, worshipping of an unknown God) maketh us to have so little access unto him, and taste so little of that sweetness, that causeth the lips of those that are asleep to speak. How oftentimes go ye to prayer, and are no more in the exercise of fear, than if ye were to speak to one that is below you? Those glorified spirits that are now about his Throne, O, with what reverence and fear do they adore him? And if it be the practice of the higher house, why ought it not to be the practice of this lower House.

Secondlie, if ye would attain to enlargement in the exercise of prayer, ye would be much in paying those vows that ye have made to God, when ye were enlarged. I am perswaded of this, that our making inquiry after vows, and our deserring to pay them, say in our practice (before the Angel) *it was an error*, it doth, no doubt, obstruct our access and libertie to God: these two are conjoined together, paying of vows and access to God, *Job 22. 27. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee* (which is access) *and thou shalt pay thy vows*. Are there not many of us that decree many things without our selves that are not established by God? O, when shal our resolutions and our practice be of like equal extent.

There is a third thing we would give you as a commendous way to attain to the exercise of prayer, and enlargement in it, be much in the exercise of fervencie: Ah, when we go to prayer under bonds, and straitning, we take libertie to our selves to abbreviat and cut short our prayers? O, do we not know what a blessed practice this is, to wrestle with God, were it until the dawning of the day, and not to let him go till he

blest us? what was it that made way to *Jacob's* enlargements? was it not his seriousness and fervency? and these two are often conjoynd in the *Psalm*, *I cryed, and he heard me*; the one importing his fervency, and the other his access. Our prayers for the most part, dies before we win up to heaven, they proceed with so little zeal and fervency from us. This was the saying of a holy man, that he never went from God without God; that ay where he left him, he knew where to find him again. It is a saying that many of us doth not so much as endeavour to attain to. Alas, we may say, that sin of neutrality and indifference in prayer, hath slain its ten thousands of enjoyments when our sins (in prayer) hath but slain their thousands.

There is a fourth thing which we shal speak unto, as the most compendious way to attain enlargement in the exercise of prayer, and it is this, ye would be under a deep and divine impression of these things that ye are to speak of to God in the exercise of prayer, either to have your spirits under an impression of sorrow or an impression of joy. In a manner a Christian ought to speak his prayer to his heart, before he speak it to God; and if we speak no more nor what our hearts doth indite, our prayers would not be long, and we should eschew these vain and needless repetitions that we use in the exercise of that duty of prayer. O, but we are exceeding rash with our mouth, and hasty with our spirits in uttering things before God. Almost we never go to prayer; but if we had so much grace as to reflect upon it, we might be convinced of this, that we have uttered things that have not been fit to be uttered unto God; as when ye speak of your burdens and crosses which ye never did seriously premeditat upon, and likewise speak of these things, as your joy, in which ye did never rejoyce. O conceive ye him to be altogether such an one as your self,



self, that such a woful cursed practice and delusion as this should overtake you? If a Christian would study before he go to prayer, to imprint and engrave his desires and petitions upon his heart, he might have more liberty and access in the proposing of them unto God.

Now we shal shut up our discourse upon this noble grace and duty of prayer with this, to speak a little unto the answers and returns of prayer.

And the first thing that we shal speak upon this subject, is, What can be the reason that the Christians in these days are so little expecting and waiting for the return and answer of their prayers. For do we not oftentimes pray, and yet do not know what it is to wait for an answer and return to these prayers of ours? this exercise which is so much undervalued by us, the want of it, doth, no doubt, prove that marvellous decay that is in the work of a Christians graces. And we conceive that the little waiting for the return and answer to prayer, doth proceed from the want of the solid faith, and of the absolute necessity that we stand in of those things that we pray to God for. For strong necessities make strong desires, and earnest expectations; but we may say, that our necessities dies with our petitions; we should be more in waiting for, and expecting the returns of our prayers.

There is this likewise, that is the reason of that woful practice, we have not a lively and deep impression of the burden of these things which we would have removed by God: as when one is praying for the removing of some lusts and some pregnant and predominant evil, and yet never cares whether it be removed or not, and the reason of this which makes us wait for, and expect so little the answer and return of our prayers, is, because we are not groaning under that yoke and burden, as though it were unsupportable; but walk lightly under that yoke and heavy burden,

burden, and therefore we wait not for the answers of our Prayers. We look upon our chains and fetters of iniquities, as though they were chains of gold and fetters of silver: and so it is no wonder that we are not much in the expectation and waiting for our return of Prayer, and to have these chains and fetters taken off us.

And there is this likewise, which is the occasion of our little waiting for an answer to our Prayers, we have not a right apprehension and uptaking of the preciousness and excellencies of these things that we seek from God. We do not know and understand what advantage should flow to us from the having of these things that we seek, and what marvellous disadvantage should flow to us from the want of them. O! but the people of this present generation, wherein we now live, have put a low rate upon the things of Religion, which are of everlasting and soul concernment, even those things that were accounted most precious and excellent by all those that have gone before us, and have taken up their possessions and eternal abode in that blessed land which is above. There is one thing which we undervalue and set at nought, and that is our communion and fellowship with God. We are indifferent in having of it, and care not whether we have it or not, which maketh us not earnestlie to press after the pursuing of it. O Christian, be perswaded of it that these are the three disadvantages that followeth unto a Christian that is not much in waiting for the answer and return of his prayer after he hath prayed.

The first disadvantage is this, it is a compendious way to win to formalitie in the dulle of Prayer. I will not say that one which doth not always wait for an answer to his prayer, that he cannot pray in spirit and in sincerity and fervencie, but I need not be afraid to say this, that he which is not so much in the desire of waiting for a return and answer to his prayer, he prays little to purpose: and it may be demonstrated

and

and clearlie shewn by this reason; can ye be serious in the accomplishing of the means, if ye do not propose some end and design before your eyes, why ye do so? Now, what is the end and scope that ye propose before your selves in your going about the exercise of that dutie of prayer? I confess, we ought to go about it, not only as a help and mean to remove our evils, and to obtain our advantages; but likewise we ought to go about it as a dutie incumbent to us: but if we go not about the exercise of prayer, under both these considerations, and except we wait for the return and answer, certainlie we pray not aright.

There is a second disadvantage which a Christian hath that doth not wait for the answer and return of his prayer, he loseth many sweet experiences of the love and good will of God toward him; It is no wonder that many of us doth not receive much from God, the reason of it is, because we are not expecting and waiting for much from him. I will not say but a Christian that is not much in the exercise of waiting may sometimes obtain the answer and return of his prayers; but we may say these things to such persons. If your prayers be answered, and ye have not waited for the return and answer of them, surely ye lose much sweetness and preciousness of the answer of your prayers. There is this likewise which we would say to such persons as these, if a Christians prayer be answered when he doth not wait for the answer of it, then the Christian cannot so resolutely build his faith upon such an experience, to believe that God again will answer his prayers, as if he had been waiting upon a return.

There is this third disadvantage that follows a Christian, who is not much in the exercise of waiting for the return and answer to his prayer, he cannot continue long in a praying frame. I conceive that the most fit and compendious way for a Christian, to keep his spirit in a holie and divine correspondence with God; is to have it in a holy and fit capacitie to converse with God.

God: this is a way to be much in the exercise of waiting for the return and answer of prayer. It is a sweet exercise to be expecting and waiting till the vision shall speak to you.

Now are there not many here who if they were posed with this question, when were ye put to the serious exercise of waiting for the return and answer of your Prayers after ye have prayed? I am perswaded of it, ye should find it a difficulty to fall upon the number of the days wherein ye were taken up in this exercise. I think that which doth so plainly demonstrat that woful formality and dreadful indifferency that is amongst us (in going about the exercise of this duty of Prayer) is this, We do not wait for the answers and returns of our prayers from God. O Christians, are ye so perfectly compleat, or have ye already attained to the full stature of one in Christ, that ye do not wait for the answer and returns of your prayers, that so ye may receive more from God?

And I would say this to these Atheists and strangers to God, who never knew what it was to wait for an answer and return to their prayers, and there are not many such here, who if their Conscience were now posed, when they did wait for a return to their prayers, they might (if they speak the truth) say that they did never wait for an answer to their prayers; I say to such, that they did never pray aright.

Now the second thing which we shal speak upon the returns and answers of prayer, is, how a Christian may come to the distinct knowledge of this, that his prayers are heard and answered? A thing indeed, we confess, that many of us are not much taken up with, we not being in the exercise to know such a thing.

And first, There is a difference betwixt the hearing of prayer, and of getting a return and answer to prayer, God in the depth of his unsearchable wisdom, may sometimes hear our prayers, and yet make a long time to interveen before he give the sensible return and answer

Enter of that prayer; that is clear from Dan. 10. 12, 13. where it is said to Daniel, *That from the first day that he afflicted his soul, his prayers and supplications were heard:* and yet it is one and twenty days before the answer and return of his prayer did come. These are two distinct mercies to the Christian, the hearing of his prayer, and receiving the answer and return of his prayer, which he hath prayed for. And it is clear from Psal. 34. 6. *This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his trouble.*

We shal say this secondly, that there is a great and vast difference betwixt the returns of prayer, and the delays of the returns of it, and yet it were a bad inference to infer, that God doth deny to give us the answer of our prayers, though he delay them a while, or to say that we can have no answer at all, though we confess, that is the common place from which Christians do bring all their Arguments to prove that their prayers are not heard, even the delay of the answer and return to their prayers: and this is clear from Rev. 6. 10, 11. *Where the souls of these that are crying to God for the revenge of their blood upon the earth, their prayer is heard, and yet withal, they are desired to stay a little, until their brethren (that are to be slain) shall be fulfilled, and then their prayer shall be fulfilled and accomplished unto them.*

There is this thirdly, that we shal speak to, and it is this, That sometimes our prayers may be both heard and answered, and yet we will not believe that is so, when we are waiting for the distinct and solid apprehension of this mercy: and we conceive that this is either occasioned through the greatness of affliction upon a Christian, and the continuance of his stroke, as it is evidently clear from Job 9. 16, 17. where Job saith, *If I had called, and he had not answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkned to my voice.* And he gives this to be the reason of it, *For he breaketh me with a tempest and multiplieth my wounds without cause.*

Or this may be the reason of it likewise, Why? when our prayers are both heard and answered, we believe not that it is so, and it is because of the want of the exercise of waiting for an answer, and that we are not much taken up in expecting a return from God to our prayers; therefore when our prayers are heard and answered, we cannot believe that it is so.

There is this fourth thing which we shal speak to, concerning the returns of prayer; that the prayers and petitions of a Christian, even while he is under the exercise of misbeliefs, they may be heard and taken off his hand. as it is clear from *Psal* 116. 11, 12. *I said in my haste, all men are liars: but there is a sweet and precious experience which followeth that, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me? and this is clear from* *Jonah* 2. 4. compared with *vers.* 7. where he saith, *I am cast out of thy sight; and yet in vers. 7. When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord, and my prayer came in unto thee, unto thy holy temple.*

Now, To give some answer to the question which we proposed, how one may know whether or not his prayers be answered? First, if a Christian be enlarged and enabled to go on in duty, though he do not receive a sensible manifestation of the grace and acceptance of his prayer, but (in a manner) he is denyed of the answer and return of it, yet if he do attain to such a length, as to pray without ceasing, and to have strength to accomplish this duty of prayer, that is (no doubt) a clear token and evidence that our prayers and supplications are heard by God, and in his own and appointed time, these prayers of yours shal be answered, and this is clear in *Psal.* 138. 3. where *David* giveth this as a token and evidence, that his prayers were heard and answered, *In the day when I cryd thou answeredst me: and what is the argument that he bringeth to prove this, that his prayer was answered? it is, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.*

Certainly



Certainly it is a bad sign, and an evil token that your prayers are heard; if because he denyeth your suit and petition for a time, ye leave off the exercise of the duty of prayer, and faint in the day of your adversity.

There is a second thing by which you may know whether or not your prayers have met with a return and answer from God, and it is this, if your prayers be suitable unto his own word, and agreeable unto his holy and most divine will and pleasure, then you may be perswaded of this, that God hath heard your prayers; this is abundantly clear from 1. Joh. 3. 14. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will he heareth us. Certainly it is difficult and exceeding hard, we confess, for a Christian to exercise Faith upon the sure word of Prayer, abstracting from all other grounds: But if we would have our faith elevated and raised to so divine a pitch, we would believe this precious truth. That whatsoever we ask according to his will he heareth us, and that he will answer our supplications; therefore will we wait patiently and faithfully upon God.

There is this 3d. thing whereby you may know whether or not your prayers be heard, and it is, if ye have delight and spiritual joy in the exercise of this blessed duty of Prayer, though ye have not the return and answer of your prayers, yet it is an evidence & token that your prayers are heard, and you shall shortly have an answer given to them: and when ye lose your delight in duties, which ye once attained to, then ye may be afraid thereof, there is somewhat of this hinted at in Joh. 27. 9. 10. where Job giveth this as a reason and ground, that he will not hear the prayer and supplication of the hypocrites, because he delighteth not himself in the Almighty; inferring this much, that if he would delight himself in God, then he would hear his prayer and give him a return and answer to it.

There

There is a fourth thing whereby you may know whether or not your prayers are heard and answered, and it is when your sadness and anxiety (about that which you were asking from God in prayer) is removed and taken away; This is clear from *2 Sam. 1. 18.* where this is given as an evidence that *Hannah* was heard in her prayer and supplication, because *her countenance was no more sad*; and certainly when our prayers have such a return, then we may know distinctly that they are answered by the Lord.

And the fifth thing that we would propose to you, whereby ye may know whether or not your prayers have met with a return and answer from God, if ye pray, making use of Jesus Christ as a blessed days-man, to interpose himself betwixt the father and you, then may you be perswaded of this, that your prayers are heard; this is clear, where it is twice repeated; *John 14. 13, 14. Whatsoever ye ask in my Name, ye shall receive it; believe it, he can deny you nothing, that you seek from him, if you ask in faith.*

Now that which thirdly we shal speak to upon the return of prayer, it is, to these things which doth obstruct the hearing of our prayers, why they are not answered by him; so that oftentimes when we pray to him, *he shutteth out our prayers from him, and covereth himself with a cloud, so that our prayers cannot pass thorow*: O but if that duty and precious counsel which *Hierusalem* gave unto *Isaiab*, *37. 4.* which truly is worthy to be engraven on our hearts, *Lift up thy prayer, &c.* which doth import that it was a weighty thing, which would require much seriousness in going about it: I say, if that worthy counsel were obeyed, we should not have need to propose these obstructions, and to complain of Gods ways. Now we shal speak to these obstructions which hinder as.

First, hypocrisie which we have in the exercise of prayer.

er: O but we pray much with our judgement, when we pray not much with our affections: that is, our light will cry out, crucifie such a lust; and our affections will cry again out, hold thy hand: It is a difficulty to have the spirit of a Christian brought such a length, as to have his judgement and affections of like measure and extent. *Job* giveth this as a reason why God will not hear a hypocrites prayer, *Job* 27. O, even because he is not constant. there is a woful disagreement betwixt what we speak, and what we think; we speak many things with our mouth, which our hearts sometimes witness that we would not have God granted us; (in a manner) our affection is a protestation against the return to many of our prayers: Our idols are so fixed in our hearts, that we spare *Agag* the King of our lusts, though there be given out a commandment from the Lord to destroy all these; and it may oftentimes speak, that the bitterness of death is Past out against us. Seeing we do oftentimes spare them contrary to his blessed command.

There is a second thing which obstructs the exercise of prayer, and it is that woful and cursed end that we propose to our selves in going about that duty, this is clear in *James* 4. 3. *Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.* O! that woful Idolatry that Christians do intertain in the exercise of prayer. That glorious and inconceivable attribute of God, of being *Alpha* and *Omega*, which we do sacriliginously attribute to our selves in making our selves the beginning of our Prayers, and the end of them also. It hinders much our return of prayer; certainly those woful ends that we spake of in the beginning of our discourse shall along in yie doth (no doubt) marvelously obstruct the answers of our prayers.

Now the last thing that we shall speak upon the return of prayer, shall be to some advantages which a Christian may have from this, that his prayers are answered, and that he hath received a return from the Lord.

Lord: believe me, there is more love in the answer of one prayer, than Eternity could make a Commentary upon; O, what love is in this, that he should condescend to hear our prayers? That such a glorious and infinite Majesty should (in a manner) deign himself to bow down his ear to take notice of these petty desires that we propose unto him? And there are these five advantages that a Christian may have from this.

1. It is an excellent way to keep the grace of love in exercise, this is clear in *Pf. 116. 1. I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.* O but love in some hath eminently taken fire when they have reflected upon this, that their prayers are heard.

There is this second advantage that a Christian hath, it is an excellent motive and perswasion to make us constant and frequent in the exercise of prayer, this is clear in *Psalm 116. 2.* where he reflecteth upon the hearing of his voice: *therefore I will call upon him as long as I live.* I am perswaded of this, that our little exercise in prayer doth much proceed from this, that we wait not for a return of prayer, and therefore oftentimes it is, that we do not receive a return; believe me, there is more joy and divine satisfaction to be found in the solid and spiritual convictions of this, that our prayers are heard, than we will have in the exercise of many prayers that we pray.

There is a third advantage that a Christian hath from the return and answer of his prayer, it is an evident token from the Lord that his prayer is accepted by him, when a Christian can read his reconciliation by the gracious return of his prayer, and that he is in a gracious estate and condition, and, O! is not that a great advantage? We confess God may hear the prayers of the wicked for mercies that are common, but the hearing of a real Christians prayer, both in mercies common and special, proveth that his person is accepted by God; we must be accepted of him through

*to the Duty of Prayer.*

through Jesus Christ, before that he can have pleasure in our sacrifice; and is not this a precious advantage, to read your adoption upon the returns and answers of your prayers from God? May not the Christian say when he meets with such a return and answer of his prayer, now I am perswaded *that I am begotten unto a lively hope, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication?* In a manner, it is a character wherein you may read your interest and interestment in that precious and most blessed inheritance that is above. O if there were no more to provock you to wait for the return and answer of your prayers nor this, it may be sufficient unto many of these debates and disputings that you have about your interest in Jesus Christ; And, O may not this argument provock you to love him.

The fourth advantage that comes to the Christian from the consideration of the return and answers of his prayer, it is a compendious way to make us desist from the committing of iniquity; Hence is that word in *Psal. 6. 8.* where upon the consideration of the hearing of his prayer, he breaketh forth in that saying, *Depart from me all ye workers of iniquity, for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping.* In a manner, speaking so much, that he would have nothing to do with such ones as they were.

Lastly, The return and answer of prayer is an excellent way to keep our faith in exercise, it is a sweet experience of the love of God; upon which we may build our hope in the darkest night, even to call to mind these things that he hath given to us in former days, certainly a holy and divine reflection upon these things, might perswade us that he will not shut up his tender and loving mercies, into an everlasting forgetfulness.

Now to close up our discourse upon this noble duty and grace of prayer, we shall desire this one thing of you, *who is begotten unto a lively and precious hope,*

that you may be more in that noble exercise; I may say, that there is no sin which a Christian shall be more deeply convinced of in that day when his feet shall stand upon the utmost line of time, as this sin of the neglect of the duty of prayer; And we confess God may reprove many, *That they bind heavy burdens on mens shoulders, that are grievous to be born: and do not so much themselves as touch them with one of their fingers.*

But however, seriously enlarge your hearts unto this blessed exercise, for believe me, it is the way if (so we may speak) to bring down heaven upon earth; But alas, I am afraid that this duty of Prayer is not much now in practice amongst many of us in these dayes: is not prayer that noble duty almost laid by in this evil and perverse generation, as a thing unsavory? Oh, that ye had now a divine anticipation of that glorious enjoyment of him, which you shall have throughout all the ages of Eternity, if you be serious in this exercise! Oh, may we not walk mournfully many dayes in the bitterness of our souls, because we are not more in the exercise of secret prayer! Oh! Whether is our Devotion gone in these dayes? O! whether is it gone? I am afraid, that if these that have lived before in ancient days were now alive, doubtless they would be ignorant of us and they would not acknowledge us for Christians. I would say this for these who never seriously practised this Duty as yet, of which number there are many. O but Prayer be another thing than the most part of you conceives it to be. I think it is not only mysterious in its nature, to conceive how the spirit of man can converse with him that is the Father of spirits, how there should intervene a communion and fellowship betwixt such two. It is a mystery and riddle surely, which we cannot easily unfold. But withal, *This is a lamentation, & shall be for a lamentation, that the exercise*



*to the duty of Prayer*

*use and practise of Prayer is grown as mysterious as the nature of it.* O! but there are many of you that suppose ye are praying a right and therefore you think all is well, who shall be cutoff as those that never prayed. I conceive if we believe all that is spoken upon this exercise of prayer, what divine prosperities are requisite to a Christian, that would seriously go about the exercise of this precious duty, we might cry forth, *This is a hard saying who can hear it?* And certainly it is altogether impossible for for us, though it be not impossible to God, to enlarge our hearts to pursue it. *For with him nothing is impossible.* O! that if once ye might be perswaded to set about the exercise of this precious and most excellent duty of Prayer, which will be to your eternal advantage, and Soul everlasting concernment I am afraid, ( O Christians ) that if one from heaven ( who hath entered into these everlasting and blessed possessions of that excellent and blessed estate of life ) would come down to earth ( if so with reverence we may speak ) and preach upon this Text of oars, *Pray without ceasing*, and speak of these precious and unspeakable advantages, which do accompany the men that is much in the exercise of Prayer. there be many of us, I fear would scarcely be inclined to hear such an exhortation. And more nor this, if one from the dead would arise, and come from the pit unto this City and preach upon this Text unto you, *Pray without ceasing*, having the chains of everlasting wrath hanging about his neck, and preach upon these sad and unspeakable disadvantages, which are to be found in the neglect of this blessed exercise of this duty of prayer, and should desire you to flee from that wrath that is to come. O! would there not be many of you ( I am afraid ) who would stop your ears, and would not listen unto the voice and language of such an Exhortation? Ah! whether are many of us going? Whether are we going? Certainly the apprehensions and thoughts of everlasting separation from the presence of

*The way how a Christian*

the Lord, is not much engraven, and deeply imprinted upon the spirits of the hypocritical Christians of this generation, we are not afraid of that wrath and eternal destruction, which is approaching unto us.

But to you that are heirs of the promise, who are heirs of the grace of life, and *who are begotten again unto a lively hope*, I would say this unto you, *Pray without ceasing*, and once you shall sing without all ceasing, and without all interruption: and to these that pray not, the day is coming when they shall howl in that bottomless pit, amongst those everlasting flames of fire and brimstone, when they shall be brayed in the mortar of the wrath of God, by the pestil of his severe Justice, when his Omnipotency shall uphold you, and his Justice shall smite you eternally. Oh, it were many of your advantages that you were (indeed) beasts without immortal Souls, For to have Souls, doth capacitate you for an eternal being, and for an eternal punishment.

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S E R M O N V.

*Prov. 4. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*

**W**E conceive if there were a window opened in each one of our bosoms, through which each one of us that are here, might behold one anothers hearts, we would become monsters and wonders one of us to another, and to our selves likewise, and might cry out, *O! where is the God of judgment that takes not vengeance on such deceitful hearts?* If our hearts were turned out of us (so to speak) and we saw the inside of our hearts, we would wonder at his patience. I think such is the desperat deceitfulness of our hearts, that if all the saints since Adams days, and that be to the end of the world, had but one heart to guide, I think they

they would misguide it, I would only say this to believers, that if your hearts were left one hour to your selves to keep, ye would commit more iniquity, than ye can imagine or dream of. There is only these four things that I would speak to before I come to the words: and I would request you to take notice of them: And first, there is many of us that have two hearts in our bosom, for such an one is the hypocrite, *James 1. 8. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*, that is, a man that hath two hearts, a part of his heart goeth to God, and a part of his heart goeth to the Devil. And I think, if we were all well searched, it is to be feared that many of us would be found two hearted men. Secondly, that although ye would give Christ all your members, yet if you would not give him your heart, it should be nothing thought of; if you would give him your eyes, so that you should not look to your idols pleasantly, nor yet look with delight upon any cursed, or sinful object, and if you would give him your ears, so that you could nor would not hearken to the voice of any of your temptations, *but be as deaf as an adder unto them*; and if you would give him your tongue; so that you should not speak any thing dishonourable to him, and if you would give him your feet, so that you should not walk in any way, but in an approved path of Godliness; Now, I say, although you would give him all these members of your body, yet if ye give him not your heart, it is all to no purpose, *Prov. 23. 26. My son, give me thy heart, &c.*

Thirdly, There are many which give their hearts to their idols, and their tongues to Christ, but one day they shall be found to be but deceivers. Lastly, it is a noble thing for a Christian to be taken up in the keeping of his heart: I may say this of the heart, which the Apostle *James* said of the tongue, *it is an untameable evil, full of deadly poison*, *James 3. 8.* The heart is taken up with whoring from God, and with contriving the way how to satisfy its lusts, and continually forsaking the li-

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The way how a Christian  
ving God; Our hearts are doing nothing in all life-  
time (many of us) but prophaning his holy name,  
and blaspheming the God of *Jacob*.

Now to come to the words, there are four things  
therein. First the duty imposed upon a Christian, and  
that is to keep his heart. Secondly, that the heart  
of man hath many seekers, which is imported in that  
word *keep*. Thirdly, you have the qualification (and  
way how a Christian should keep his heart, which are  
rendered in these words, *with all diligence*, or as the  
words may be rendered, *with all keeping*. And lastly,  
the reasons why you should do so, *for out of it are the  
issues of life*; for if you do so you shall have life, but if  
not, from thence is the issues of death. Now from the  
first thing in the words, you would consider these two things

First, that it is a duty incumbent to every Christi-  
an to keep his heart, this is clear, not only from our  
Text, but likewise in *Deut. 4. 9. Only take heed to thy  
self and keep thy soul diligently, &c.* *Prov. 13. 26. Guard  
thy heart in the way.* Which is, study to keep it di-  
ligently in the way of Godliness, and it is clear likewise  
that a Christian ought to keep his heart for the great  
advantages that are holden out in Scripture for so do-  
ing, only take place in *Prov. 16. 22. Better is he that  
ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a City.*

The Second thing that I would say, to point out the  
woful disadvantages that waits upon him that rules not  
his own heart, but gives it leave to rove here and there  
*Prov. 25. 28. He that hath not rule over his own spi-  
rit, is like a city that is broken down and without walls.*  
And there is these two disadvantages that waits upon  
not-keeping of the heart. 1. There is no temptation that  
assaults a heart that is not kept, but they become victori-  
ous, spiritual strength hath forsaken them that keeps  
not their hearts. 1. There is no exercise nor duty a  
Christian is employed in, which kept not his heart, but  
he is like a ruinous city which hath no walls, and in  
which there is no order.

Now

ought to keep his heart.

Now, the next thing that I would speak to, is to show what it imports to keep the heart, and what are the directions and ways, which a Christian ought to have before him in the exercise and duty of keeping his heart.

And first, it imports this, that a Christian should observe the motions of his heart, and should not let his heart nor thoughts go astray, but should have a register of all their motions, as is clear in *Luke 21. 34. And take heed to your selves, lest at any time your heart be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.*

The second thing which keeping of the heart includes is, You must keep all the things that pertain to your hearts; and there are these five things which ye must keep. First, your thoughts, you must keep your thoughts so straitly, that you must not give them any sinful latitude in the least manner. Secondly, a Christian he must keep his eyes, which are the windows, through which much wickedness is conveyed to the soul, *Prov. 23. 26. My son give me thy heart, &c. Prov. 4. 25. Let thine eye look right on, and let thine eye lids look straight before thee: as if Solomon had said, it is but foolishness to keep your hearts, if ye keep not your eyes.* Thirdly, ye must keep your tongues that they speak no evil of the ways of godliness; for so is the words following the Text, *Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee,* which is, Order thy tongue. Fourthly, you must keep your feet, that you walk in the paths of wickedness; if once you give a latitude to your feet to go in the way to hell, it shal be but in vain to keep your hearts, therefore keep your feet from running to the murder of your own souls. Lastly, ye must keep your ears, ye should delight to speak good of godliness, and ye should also delight to hear good spoken of it: ye should not be among these that savour of nothing but of sin;  
D 3 but

but ye should be amongst these that savour of good : Therefore as ye would not be accessory to the murder of your own souls, and as ye would not have the bloud of them lying upon your heads, he must needs keep all these parts that belong to the keeping of your hearts aright.

The third thing which the keeping of your hearts includes, is to eschew all unclean things that may defile your hearts, *Prov. 5. 8. Remove thy way from her, and come not nigh the door of her house.* When you see any evil thing approaching, you must depart from it, and eschew it, *Deut. 12. 30. Take heed to thy self that thou be not snared;* There are many snares, that may be accessory to destruction, and there is this that *Moses* marks as a chief evil, and likewise oftentimes forbids in this Book to have false *weights and ballances*, *Lev. 19. 32. Deut. 25. 13.* they are not sinful of themselves, but because they are an appearance of evil, they should eschew them, therefore he forbids them, and the Apostle bids us likewise *abstain from all appearance of evil,* *1 Thes. 5. 22.*

The fourth thing which keeping of the heart includes, is to put restraints upon your hearts, that so you may not commit iniquity, ye ought first to lay the bond of Christs love upon your selves, ye should likewise lay the bond of judgment upon your selves, knowing that once God shal call you to a reckoning for all your wickedness, which now most wickedly you commit, and ye ought to lay the bonds of Gods Omniscieny upon your selves, to know and consider that all things are known to him, and that he seeth all things, and ye ought likewise to consider how grievous, and how displeasent a thing sin is to the Majesty of God, that man who is the workmanship of his hand should rise up against him; We may say that of our selves which is in *Lament. 3. 22. It is of the Lords mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not, they are fresh every morning, &c.* All these things



ought to keep his heart.  
a Christian ought to lay to heart, and seriously to consider them.

The fifth thing which keeping of the heart includes, a Christian ought not to slight the opportunities given unto him for the strengthening of his grace; for they which slight opportunities, keep not their own hearts.

The last thing which it imports, is, that a Christian would be much in the diligent exercise of duties, that the heart may be kept and holden in a noble frame, and there is two exercises which a Christian ought to be diligent in. First, the exercise of prayer. Secondly, the exercise of watching. There is a five fold frame which a Christian should be in, which would rightly keep his heart. First, in a frame of praying, that he should not be slack and cold to go about duties, the command thereof is holden out in that word, *Watch and pray*; and also in that word, *Pray without ceasing*. The second frame should be a believing frame, and it is to be feared that there are not many such here, but that there are many walking in such a way and frame, which, alas I fear, will lead them in the way to hell? If we were sincere, we would hold Christ fast, and would not let him go; and if our hearts were in a right frame, we would avoid any thing that might make him to depart from us; But, alas; We have many clear evidences (now a days) that we are not for Christ; we care not whether we have his presence or want it; the want of his presence is as lightsome and pleasant to us, and as well taken with by many (I will not say all) as the enjoying of his presence; and this is a sure evidence of gross prophaneity, ignorance and estrangement from God. If there were no more to prove it but this, your stoutness of heart to meddle with sin, proves that you are unsound Christians. We would desire you by all the torments of hell, and by all the terrors of that everlasting lake, which burneth with fire and brimstone for ever and ever, by all the joys of heaven,

heaven, of that higher house, that ye would carry a circumspect walk before God. The third frame that we would desire you to walk in, is in a tender frame; and if so ye were walking ye would be loath to commit sin wilfully, and we shal be to them eternally which do so. We will not (many of us) believe this, although Angels would preach it unto us. for our hearts are hard like an Adamant stone. I would only say this to you, this Book, this glorious Book is sealed with seven seals, and our hearts are sealed with fourteen seals. O! wo be to those hard hearts that many of us have, we will never know until they run us eternally into the bottomless pit. The fourth frame that a Christian should walk in, is in a loving frame; You ought to have your hearts burning within you with love towards that glorious, infinite, and mysterious object, Jesus Christ. We shal never be able to comprehend, nor recompense that love which he hath to us; for the furthest we can go, is to be sick of love for him. But, O! he died with love for us, for he had so great love to us, that he laid down his life for us. The fifth frame that a Christian should walk in, is a fearing frame, to walk under the fear of the hazard that you are in, if you be left to your selves, and to your own strength; I may say, cursed be the person that never kepted his heart in none of these five things that we have spoken of.

Now the third thing we would speak to from the words is, to know the times when a Christian should especially keep his heart; and there is six times when (I conceive) he should watch over his heart carefully and keep it.

1. After he hath met with some enjoyments, then he should keep his heart, and not let it go wrong.

2. The second time is, in the time of desertion; for that time is a wandering time from the living God.

3. A Christian should keep his heart when he perceives his temptations to be very subtil.

And

And the fourth time is, to keep your hearts diligent in duties, for when you are negligent in duties, then the Devil is busie to get your hearts.

The fifth time is under a secure frame, then you should keep your hearts mightily.

And the last time, when temptations are like to grow very strong, you should then at that time keep your hearts with a strong guard.

Now as for the first time, to wit, to keep it under enjoyments, we should then study to keep our hearts; for then, and at that time the Devil condescends to dandle us upon his knees (if so we may speak) and for this we would give you some considerations.

The first consideration is, the heart of man is never prouder and proner to commit iniquity, than after Enjoyments of God, he is never more prone to Security than after Enjoyments? when was it that the Spouse slept, but when she was full of joy? Song 5. 3. *I have put off my Coat, how shall I put it on again?* &c. When was it that the Disciples Roved, but when they were on the Mount, when they said, *Let us make three tabernacles*, Matth. 17. 14. And when was it that John committed Idolatry? was it not when he saw these excellent Visions of Heaven.

The second Consideration is, that the stroke which is given by the Devil after Enjoyments, it is a very sad stroke, and hath caused many to say, *Who can stand before the Children of Anak?* and to draw that Conclusion, *I shall once fall by the hand of some of mine enemies.*

The third Consideration is this, if a Christian imbrace a Temptation after Enjoyments, it will be very hard for him to shake it off.

The fourth Consideration is, that the imbracing of a Temptation after Enjoyments, it is a sin very hardly to be repented for; it will cost him many Tears for repenting of it; for it is a hardning thing, which will harden his Heart mightily under all sorts of Sins which we can commit.

- Fifthly,

Fifthly, Consider this, that the Embracing of Temptation after Enjoyments, it is very displeasing to Christ, when ye embrace an Idol, and prefers it before an absent Christ. O! that is a most dangerous Sin. But when you embrace an Idol after Enjoyment, that is a damnable Sin, for ye prefer it to a present Christ; O that is a fearful Sin.

Now the second time when ye should keep your Hearts, is, when ye are going about the exercise of Duties, and especially in the duty of prayer, and ye should keep it in four or five respects. First, in going about duties, and namely in Prayer, ye are letting in vain thoughts, if your hearts be not well kept. Secondly, the heart of a Christian is most ready to fall in the sin of formality, and therefore if ye keep not your hearts well in duties, you cannot be but formal in performance of them. Thirdly, our hearts many times have too low thoughts and uptakings of the incomprehensible Majesty of God: The damnable ignorance which is amongst people, makes them get so little advantage in Prayer; do you not speak to him as to one of your fellow-companions? Where is the exercise of fear, and of trembling, which Christians in old times used to have, as *Moses* when he appeared and came before God? Fourthly, our hearts are prone to misbelief, and ready always to misbelieve God, and his promises. Lastly, except ye keep your hearts, it is impossible for you to take alongst with you your necessity; if one were standing by and heard your prayers, they would say that you are not in earnest with God; for you seek such things from a principle of light, and not from necessity. Now I would pose you with this, whether ever ye have been observant in any of these duties or not? There are many whose prayers make them to have more distance with God, therefore I would request you to look to this, that ye be serious in Prayer, and to know whether or not this be your frame; for there is some that will come from Prayer with far more bonds on them

*ought to keep his heart.*

than when they began; and what is the reason of that, but want of fervency? It is a great mystery of his love, that he sends not fire from Heaven to burn our sacrifice, and consume our selves likewise; for what is many of our prayers but *as it were the cutting off of a dogs neck, which is an abomination to the Lord?*

The third time when a Christian should especially keep his heart, is, under desertion; and I shal give you three reasons why we should watch well at that time. First, the Devil is busiest to seek our hearts under desertion. Secondly, the imbracing of an idol under desertion, it is for that why God lengthens out the time of our lying under desertion so long, because we go to the bed of love with an idol when Christ is away. Thirdly, because a Christian hath least strength then, he loseth both much of his faith and of his love. He maketh you then to look on the World to be as tasteless as the white of an egg; ye must take that as a dispensation of Christs love, that he makes all things tasteless to you under desertion; That is a noble dispensation, for by it he imposes a necessity upon you to keep your hearts till he return unto you again.

The fourth time when a Christian should keep his heart, is, in a secure frame: I think there are some sleeping in a sleep of conscience, which will never awake till the screechings of the damned in hell awake them. I shal propose these two considerations to keep your hearts in security. 1. Because when ye are secure ye have then least strength; and is there not many amongst you that dare say but that the Devil then assaults you bitterly? and when your heart is lying in security, it speaks that ye are in a carnal frame. 2. If ye keep not your hearts when ye are secure, then ye may bid faith, love, and joy farewell until some other time; as ye may see in the practice of *Felix, Go away, and I will hear thee at another time, Act. 24. 25.* I would not desire a more sad case to an enemy, than not to keep your heart when he is under security, for he may bid the graces of the Spirit farewell until another time. The

The last time when a Christian ought especially to keep his heart, is, when strong and subtil temptations appear plausible, honest like, and beautiful, then you must be upon your watch. O doth not temptations win in upon your hearts, before ever ye be aware? and this speaks much security and unwatchfulness: I would say it is hard, yea, very hard to a Christian who is not watchful, to take up the ways of the Devil, whose ways are more subtil than the way of an Eagle in the air, or the way of a serpent upon a rock, or the way of a ship upon the sea. Who can comprehend his ways? He tempts us always, both upon our right hand and upon our left hand, both behind and before, both waking and sleeping, we are never free of his deceitful and unsearchable crafts. I would say this unto you, he is happy that fears always, and hearkens to Christs voice of direction in his word, depending upon him for strength, but many listen more to the voice of temptations nor to Christs blessed voice.

Now, the next thing which I would speak to you, is to propose some considerations to press you to keep your hearts, and O! that ye would consider of them, and lay them to heart.

The first consideration is this, I think many of us may be afraid that the Devil dwells and keeps possession in many of our hearts, and alas! He is like to be a possessor of some of them perpetually. I will give five evidences of one, that by all appearance, the Devil hath his heart. And, now I charge you (O Atheists!) in the Name of our Lord and Saviour precious Christ, that ye would examine your selfe by them. First, was never one of you convinced to cry out that word in Psalm 25. 11. *For thy Names sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great;* I say to such persons that were never convinced to cry out this, and were never convinced of the hard difficulty to win to the right keeping of your hearts, by all appearance the Devil hath your hearts in keeping; for these whose hearts are in the



hands of the Devil, they are never sensible of their lost estate. Secondly, these who never wan to make use of Christ, that is a token that the Devil hath their hearts in keeping: there are many of us who is convinced of the vanity of our idols, but yet, alas! many of us drowneth our convictions with the sin of tippling, and buries them in the sepulchre of drunkenness; but believe it, if ye go on so, and continue therein, God will plead with you for the same. The third evidence, one that hath a silent, hardened and deceiving conscience, and whose conscience is silent, by all appearance the Devil hath that persons heart in his hand; for the Devil enticeth many to sin with greediness, and will make their conscience not to reprove them, so that they delight in no better, for he hath taken away the tongue of their conscience, so that it cannot speak: But believe it, the day is coming when your conscience shall be the greatest foe and enemy that ye can or shall have; and believe it, there are many of you here, who have your hearts so hardened as those that are mentioned, Ephes. 4. vers. 17, 18. *Who walk in the vanity of their own mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts.* Your conscience when it is cauterized; it will not speak to you, although ye would commit that damnable sin against the Holy Ghost. And ye think your selves well enough when it doth not reprove you; But, alas! ye sleep with a false witness in your bosom, it hath many alluring delusions, but one day the words of it will be as sharp as swords; it will cry, *Peace, peace, when behold sudden destruction:* It will make you sleep sound for all the danger that is hanging above you. Ye walk (many of you) *adding drunkenness to thirst.* O Atheists! What will ye do when that day shall come upon you, when these two Books shall be opened? First, the book of your wanderings and back-

sliding;

hidings, in which a huge innumerable troop of sins are written. And secondly, the book of your conscience, and there can be nothing read out of that first book, but thy conscience shal confirm it with *Amen*.

The second consideration is, that if ye were to live eighty years, and though ye should weep and mourn fourty of these years perpetually, if it could be possible, and pray other fourty of these years, yet all that would be for nought, if ye will not give him your hearts: Believe me, if ye give not him your hearts, that sentence shal be pronounced upon you, *Depart*. Oh! will ye not give him your hearts who ought to have them, both by creation and redemption?

The third consideration is, Did ye never find any difficulty to believe, or to pray, or to love God? Ye may be perswaded of it, that ye are sleeping under a dangerous delusion, that ye think ye are going and shal go to Heaven, when ye shal be thrust down to Hell. I would say this, there hath been much joy amongst the Devil and his Angels for the success which he hath had in *Glasgow*: he hath purchased many harpers to himself, who sing that cursed song, *I am not far from victory*. I think we may turn that word into another way, which Christ said to his Disciples, *There is one of you twelve that shall betray me*. I think he may otherwise of us, eleven of each twelve that are here will betray me. O, it is sad, that the Son of God, even precious Christ, should have so many betrayers amongst us! O! therefore give Christ your hearts. Did ye never read that of *Mat. 25, 2*. There were five wise Virgins, and five foolish; and if there be of professors that shal be rejected, Alas! what shal come of you that never knew him? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, O! what shall the ungodly and sinners do?

The fourth consideration is, I would propose these three things to you. First, what is the cause, O Atheists, that ye cannot endure hypocrisie, why ye cannot look

look upon Christians? The cause is, you hate not only the image and picture of Christ, but the very substance of Christ. Why hate ye not the rest of sins as well as hypocrisie? It is because the rest of sins look rather like the Devil, and therefore ye love them: but hypocrites seem to have something of God in them, therefore ye hate them. Secondly, O Atheists! do ye believe that there is a Heaven and a Hell, and an eternity of pain, and a day of judgment? If ye believed those things, ye would not be so prophane. Thirdly, did ye never find any delight in praising and commending of him? Your heart saith, No, and your practice saith, no, O wo, wo to you eternally?

The fifth consideration is, the day is approaching, when the least iniquity shall be preached in the hearing of Angels and men that every one committed, there shall not a jot of sin be passed by: and of all sinners, the hypocrites shall have the saddest countenance, because they shall be disappointed of a joyfull end, and lose the opinion of the Saints, which will make them to look with a sad countenance in that day. A hypocrite will be more moved for the loss of the approbation of the Saints, than for the loss of divine approbation: O! know and consider these three things. First, know that all your iniquities shall be read in the hearing of Angels and Men: The very thoughts which ye have had at midnight, shall be known. What will be your thoughts then, O Atheists! in that day? Secondly, know that hypocrisie may win easily through the world under the name of grace, but in that day there shall be a clear distinction made. It is hard to rid marches betwixt hypocrisie and grace: but God shall take your visorn off your face, and let you be known, and ye shall get the name which ye deserve, O hypocrites. Thirdly, know that wo shall be to such, which shall not be found in Christ at that day, O will ye take him, and give him your hearts? I take all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Saints about the Throne of God to witness, yea, I take the ve-

ry stones of these walls, and the timber of this house, and this Book in my hand, to witness against you, that ye were invited to give your hearts to Christ.

The last consideration is, he that will not give his heart to Christ, believe it, these four things are coming upon him: First, he shall be no more intreated to keep his heart, neither shall he be intreated to give his heart to Christ any more, for the Devil shall have it. Secondly, O Atheists! these four things shall overcome you. First, sin it shall have dominion over you: you once delighted mightily in sin, but alas! it shall be a heavy burden to you in that day. Secondly, the wrath of God shall overcome you: O, that shall be a mighty Prince. Thirdly, the Devil. And lastly, the lusts of your own hearts, all these shall tread you in the mire. Fourthly, there is this which is coming upon you, O Atheists! *There shall be a sentence of eternal excommunication pronounced against you, which would not give your hearts to Christ.* These blessed and gracious lips that always did delight in speaking good to lost sinners, shall then pronounce that sad and woful sentence against you, *Depart from me ye cursed, I know you not.* The last thing which is approaching unto you, is, the day is coming when ye shall be sent away to that prison, out of which there is no redemption: Ye shall be a number of miserable comforters one to another in that day. Ye shall not have a grain weight of comfort for all the joy and pleasure which many of you hath had in a world; *You shall be Physicians of no value, and gnash your tongues for pain:* We would say this unto you, O let the torments of hell, or let the joys of heaven persuade you to give him your hearts: Let the one constrain you, or let the other terrifie you to this noble duty of giving him your hearts; and if ye give him not your hearts, ye shall curse the day that ever ye were born, or that ever there was a Prophet amongst you, And ye shall lament that ever ye heard tell of Christ, if ye make not use of him. Now I would only read the

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Text over again, *Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.* But if ye do not keep it with all diligence, out of it shal be the issues of death, ye shal get eternal torments for your reward.

Now to him who can perswade you to give your hearts in keeping to him, and who can anoint your eyes with eye-salve to see your lost estate, to his blessed Name we desire to give praise.

## SERMON V I.

*Prov. 4. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*

**T**Here are two great Books which a Christian ought mainly to study; there is God and his own heart; and he would study to know the unspeakable goodness of the one; and the desperat wickedness of the other. And we may say, the first time that a Christian turns over the first page of his heart, and look upon that desperat wickedness which is therein, he might be constrained to cry out, *Wo is me, I am undone;* Yea, there is as much wickedness in every ones heart who is here, as might be a quarrel to destroy a whole world, if God would contend with us in his just Judgment; I think Christians can never trust their hearts too little, and they can never trust God too much. And have we not received many proofs of both these? I may say as *Jeremiah* said, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperatly wicked, who can know it?* O but a sight of the evil temper of our hearts, and a sight of the goodness of God, would make many of us renounce our self-righteousness, and our spiritual pride; and admire his transcendent righteousness. I think a Christian ought to be as these four beasts which is mentioned in *Rev. 4. 6, 7, 8.* where the four beasts that are spoken of there, may relate to the Ministers of the Gospel,

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Gospel, and may also be taken for every real Christian. First, we should be full of eyes before, to wait on Christ, and to depend upon him, *as an hand-maid upon her Mistriss*, and not reflect upon these things that are behind, as to rest upon this, according to that word of the Apostle, *I press hard toward the mark forgetting the things that are behind, &c.* Secondly, a Christian should look to those things that are behind, to guard against enemies, and to be much in searching his former ways, to see how much of them hath been given to God, and how much of them hath been given to the Devil. Thirdly, Christians should be full of eyes within to examine themselves, and to see their own corruptions. There are many who have eyes without to take notice of other peoples carriage, but they have no eyes to look within to themselves. O! would to God that there were fewer markers and observers of other peoples carriage, and more of examiners and lookers to themselves, *purifying our selves even as he is pure.* Fourthly, we should be as a Lion in our walk, to point out our boldness against the Devil and his temptations. Fifthly, we should be like a Calf or an Ox, to point out our laboriousness. Sixthly, we should be like the face of men, to point out our understanding and knowledge. Lastly, we should be like a *flying Eagle*, to point out our heavenly-mindedness, all our conversation should be directed by the law of God, all our thoughts, and all our actions; and all our words should be conformable to his mind, and as the Eagle hath wings, so also ought we to have wings; even as they had six wings, we should have two of them to cover our face, to point out the reverence which we ought to give to God; and we should have two wings to cover our hands, to shew out the readiness to obey Gods Commandments: and we should have two wings to cover our feet, to point out our imperfections, and the crooked paths we walk into. O Christians? will ye study these three following things, and ye will not have so high thoughts of your



your selves as oftentimes ye have. First, it is through the restraining grace of God, that those grievous sins which ye commit comes not up to the perfection of *Adultery, Sodomy and Incest*. Secondly, There is no sin which ye commit, but there is some secret inclination to it, although ye think ye hate it much.

Thirdly, it is impossible for you to comprehend, take up, and remember those iniquities that ye have committed since ye were born, as *David* is convinced, *Psal. 51. 2. Cleanse me from my sin, &c.* which we conceive to be not only from his known sins, but from his sins which he hath forgotten; unto him; and I would say this unto you, *David, who was a man according to Gods own heart*, he knew not the number of his sins, and O how much less can we that never came the hundred part so far! And also you may see it in the practice of *Job*, *How many are mine iniquities, and sins, make me to know my transgression and sin.*

Now we come to the words, and there is four things which we spoke to from them at the last occasion: First, The duty commanded, *Keep thy heart*. Secondly, The qualification how this duty of keeping the heart should be gone about, and it is *with all diligence*. Thirdly, That the heart of Man hath many Temptations seeking it, which is likewise presupposed in that word, *keep thy heart with all diligence*. Lastly, The reasons why we should keep it, *for out of it are the issues of Life*. Now for the thing in the words, we spoke to two things from it; First, That it was a Christians duty to keep his Heart. Secondly, What was comprehended under this for a Christian to keep his Heart, and likewise of these disadvantages which a Christian hath from the not keeping of the heart; Now for the first thing, to wit, that it is a Christians duty to keep his heart; We shal speak yet to some Considerations to perswade you to this duty.

The first Consideration is, take notice of the bad qualifications of the heart, and there is six or seven bad qualifications

qualifications of it. First, The heart is exceeding deceitful, Jer. 17. 9. *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?* and likewise Isaiah speaks of a deceived heart, which leads people aside, Isa. 44. 20. The heart of man is a deceitful thing, it will preach peace, peace, when there is none. O if it is deceitful, it will make us commit sin, when there is no outward pleasure therein. Secondly, That the heart is desperately wicked, who can know it? that is, if there were threatening, commands, promises, and convictions of Sin, yet the heart will cause you to sin, if hell were put in your way, yet for the pleasure of an idol ye would run to Sin. Thirdly, That there is a cursed union betwixt the heart and idols, Hos. 4. 8. *And they set their hearts on their iniquity.* Hos. 4. 17. *Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone.* And that word is thrice repeated, Ezek. 14. 3, 4, 5. *They have set up their idols in their Hearts.* Keep your hearts with all diligence, I say, lest that union be entertained. Fourthly, There are many of our hearts that are exceeding mad, Eccles. 9. 3. *The heart of the sons of men is full of evil, and madness is in their heart while they live, and after that they go to the dead.* Alas! there is nothing but madness in our hearts, according to that word, *the land is full of images, and they are mad upon their idols.* Certainly the hardness of our hearts speaks, that we keep not our hearts. Fifthly, Our Hearts are divided, as is in Hos. 10. 2. *Their heart is divided, &c.* which speaks a great necessity of keeping our hearts. Sixthly, Our hearts are exceeding whorish, Ezek. 6. 9. *Because I am broken with their whorish hearts, which hath departed from me, &c.* Lastly, Our hearts are exceeding dull and ignorant in the ways of godliness, as in Eph. 4. 18. *Having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them; because of the blindness of their hearts.* There is such an Egyptian hardness upon our hearts, that we cannot know Sin, there is some of us (that I fear) knows not good by evil.

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The second Consideration is, there is such a difficulty to keep our hearts, therefore we ought strongly to guard them. *Adam had his heart but a short time in keeping, and yet he could not keep it; which shews the difficulty in keeping of it, Psal. 25. 20. O keep my soul and deliver me, let me not be ashamed, for I put my trust in thee. 1 Pet 4. 19. Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.* I would say to you, pray that prayer which Christ prayed, when he was upon the Cross, *Father into thy hands, I commit my spirit.* O, pray that prayer every day; for I say, if God forsake us but one hour, O what a great multitude of sins would we commit! *Acts 5. 4. Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God, yea, even to God, who is the Judge of all; as if he had said, it was conceived in thine heart, and then it was brought forth.*

The third consideration is, that the heart is the mother and original of all evil; and if this were believed, no doubt, we would watch with much watchfulness and serious self-examination; likewise I would say, that the not keeping of our hearts, is the cause of many of our walking so profanely, as we do; It is impossible for you to walk with God aright, if ye have not your hearts well kept; if you would keep a good conversation, then keep your hearts, for ye must never at any time trust your hearts, for either one time or another they will turn enemies unto you.

The last consideration is this, it is a most excellent thing for a Christian to keep his heart; would ye win to that commendation that *Solomon* hath, *Prov. 16. 32. He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a City,* O, then keep your hearts; as if he had said, it is better to conquer that *Modicum*, and little thing, the heart, than it is for one to conquer a City.

Now, the second thing that I would speak to for keeping of the heart, is to these disadvantages, which

is waiting upon the not keeping of it, *Prov. 25. last verse, He that hath not rule over his own spirit, is like a City that is broken down, and without walls.* And I would give you these disadvantages which will attend upon these that do not keep their hearts; First, a temptation will soon overcome that person with little difficulty; the Devil will not need to use many arguments for the gaining of that persons heart, alas! our hearts (many of them by all appearance) is in the Devils hands, and he hath a surer grip of them than we our selves have. Oh, that the Devil should have so many of our hearts, and that so many of them should be at his command! O believe it, he is the hardest Master, and he is the worst Master that ever ye served, and if he once get us within his grips, it will be hard getting out again. These hearts that are not kept, are all put through other with confusion, like a ruinous City, that wanteth Government. Believe it, ye cannot do God a greater service than to keep your hearts well, and the Devil would count it a greater courtesie done to him, if ye would resign them to him; therefore, see which of them ye will obey. Fourthly, If ye would consider and look what a thing the heart of man is, O! ye would guard more than ye do; for it is always besieged with the lusts which the Devil sets before your eyes; and there are three lusts which the Devil doth besiege you with, and be sure they shal all overcome you, if ye keep not your hearts. First, *the lust of the eye*, O but that lust hath brought many to his obedience! Secondly, *The lust of the flesh*; O, that hath overcome many! And thirdly, *The pride of life*; O to think how these three enemies hath taken many captives.

Now the next thing which I shal insist a little upon, is, to point out some marks and evidences, whether ye have kept your hearts or not.

First, If ye have kept your hearts aright, ye will endeavour to crucifie vain thoughts: Are there not some here that never knew what it was to crucifie and crush  
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vain and idle thoughts; this was an evidence that David kept his heart, *Pf. 119. 13. I hate vain thoughts, but thy Law do I love.* There is some that repents for outward breakings out of sin, but not for secret sins in their hearts, and be sure these never kept their hearts. Did ye never read that, *Mat. 5. 8. Blessed are the pure in heart?* Your sanctification shall never grow so long as ye lodge vain thoughts within your breasts. *O Jerusalem! how long shall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* saith the Lord? Be careful to think upon such thoughts as ye may answer for one day to the Lord, for your mid-night thoughts shall be read in the hearing of Angels and men. *O!* would ye not be ashamed and loath your selves, if ye would consider these vile and vain thoughts that lodge within many of you.

• Secondly, These hearts that are not kept, they embrace temptations so soon as they are assaulted by them, and they do not take notice that they are temptations, and that is a mark of one that keepeth not his heart, and that takes not notice of the Devil till he hath shut his temptations within his breast: this is clear, that David kept not his heart when the Devils temptations did so assault him, *2 Sam. 11.* and got such a victory over him; and it is also clear in the practice of Peter, when he denied his Master thrice, it was a token that he kept not his heart well.

The third Evidence of one that keepeth not his heart, is, he will commit sin with much deliberation; many of us commit sin after we have been thinking long upon it. Hence it is spoken, *That there is some that study iniquity upon their beds, and when it is light, they put it in practice, Mic. 2. 1.* and likewise in *Prov. 6.* Amongst these heinous sins that is odious and hateful to God. *Wicked imaginations* is reckoned amongst the midst of them, *vers. 8.* I say, ye who sin with much deliberation, ye have losed much of the fear of God; for to sin with deliberation or advisement, is more than to sin against sight.

The fourth mark of these that do not keep their hearts, they sin with much willingness and pleasure, *Ephraim* willingly worshipping the Calves of *Dan* and *Belshel*. Are there not some here whose hearts are following their idols, and posting hard after them. But O! can your idols do you any good, and purchase pleasure to you one day? and be sure of this, these who sin with such willingness and pleasure, that is a clear evidence, that they keep not their hearts well.

The fifth evidence of a heart that is not kept, is, when a Christians heart can mis-regard opportunities, in which opportunities, communion with God may be attained; it is a token that the Brides heart was not kept, when she would not rise and open to Christ.

The sixth evidence, when the heart takes not up the motions of God towards it; that is a token that that mans heart is not well kept, who cannot take up Gods motions; but a Christian whose heart is kept, he can take up the motions of the Spirit; this is clear, if you compare the second and third Chapters of the *Song* together.

Lastly, ye may know whether your hearts be kept or not; and that is, when ye do not discern the decays of the graces of the Spirit within you. There are four graces by which a Christian may know whether he keeps his heart or not, First, if the grace of Prayer decay. Secondly, Tenderness. Thirdly, Faith. Fourthly, Love. O! therefore I would desire you to try your graces what condition they are in, lest ye go down to the grave with a mistake in your bosom. Now I shal shut up our discourse with speaking these four things.

First, a Christian ought to keep his heart constantly: The hypocrite hath a sort of keeping of his heart, but he keeps it not so constantly as a real Christian. And there are five times when he especially keeps it. The first time is, when he is under afflictions and crosses, then he will not let his heart wander from the ways of Gods Commandments, and he will keep his heart mightily



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mightily at that time. Secondly, He will keep his heart at that time when convictions are sharp and strong upon him, *Act. 2. 37. When they were pricked in their hearts, they cryed out. men and brethren what shall we do?* amongst which we may conceive there are sundry Hypocrites. The hypocrite thinks to win through the world, under the notion of a real Saint; but believe it, although ye would win through the world under this notion, (as many do) yet the day is coming, when ye and your practices shal be put to the Touch-stone. The third time when the Hypocrite would keep his heart, is, when he is going to the Sacrament of the Communion, but when he is come from it, he will take no notice of his heart any more; and the only reason that keeps his heart then, is, that he may have peace with a natural Conscience; yea, I fear, if we were all-searched, it would be known that the most end we pray for, is, to satisfie a natural Conscience, and not to please God: The fourth time when a Hypocrite will keep his heart, is, under sickness and diseases, yea, any gross one will keep his heart in sickness, they who never prayed (almost) will pray at that time. The last time when he will keep his heart, will be, when he is called to some publick holy work, as if he were called to pray amongst Christians. O then he will keep his heart diligently! and if he be in a Ministers sight he will keep the Sabbath day; but alas, the man doth not remember that a greater one than a Minister sees him; even God the Lord. A Hypocrite will keep his outward man, but not his inward man: he will not swear, but in his heart he will curse God; he will keep his feet outwardly, but inwardly he will commit adultery in his heart: If ye would be sincere, you must mortifie your invisible idols, as well as your visible idols.

The second thing that I would say, is this, if ye keep your hearts, and not resign them freely to God, although ye were to live eighty years, and if ye would pray

the one forty, and weep the other forty of these years, (if such a thing could be possible) yet all that pains should be for nought, if ye do not freely first give him your heart; for you shall get that fearful sentence pronounced against you, *Depart from me ye cursed, I never knew you*, O, therefore while it is called to day, give God your hearts: *Psal. 78. 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies. Psal. 34. 16. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.* If ye had the tongue of an Angel to speak and pray, yet if ye give him not your hearts, all your prayers shall return back empty to you.

The third thing which I would say to you, is this, the heart of man is a thing which ye will find a great difficulty to keep, and this is a proof of it, that a Christian will even sometimes change in prayer. He will sometimes change four times. First, When he begins, he will be in a flame of love to God. And secondly, he will fall secure. And thirdly, he will have terrible thoughts of God. And lastly, before he have done, he will speak to God as to his Companion; and I would pose all of you that are here, if ye have not been in all (or most part) of these frames when you have been praying? Now I would charge you (as ye will answer to Christ one day) that ye would give him your hearts; There are two words which I would say to you, and O that ye would consider upon them, Christ comes and says to us first, *Take up thy Cross, and deny thy self, and follow me*: That is Christs first word unto a Believer, and O! but that be a great Mystery to flesh and blood. And the Devil comes and says the second word, which is, *fall down and worship me, and I will give thee a kingdom.* The first word of the Devil, is ay the fairest word that ye shall get; and the first of Christs is the sharpest. Now which of these two offers will ye chuse? I would only say these two words to you, First, Think ye not shame to refuse Christ so openly as ye do? Secondly,

condly, That the answer which ye give him, is not the answer which he seeks, I say, one day ye shal be brought before his throne, waiting for your condemnation, if ye give not precious Christ your hearts, ye shal stand before his Tribunal to receive your last and fearful doom: O Man, and O Woman, with what Face wilt thou stand? and what wilt thou have to say when thou stands before him! I remember the word of a cursed Emperour, who had made defection from Christ, he was forced to breathe out his last words thus sadly, *Thou hast overcome at last, O Galilean!* So he is too strong a party to thee to contend with, and at length he will overcome thee.

Now the last thing that I would say unto you, is, if you do not give him your hearts, (I as the Ambassador to Christ) declare to you, that Christ and you shal fight together. Put on your Harness, put on your Steel-coat, (for Christ will be ready for you) and boast when ye put it off again. And I would say this unto you, that it is impossible for you to take Christ, except ye get a sight of Christ and his beauty, and if ye saw him in his beauty, ye would say, I'll take him although I get not a Kingdom: O the Angels and glorified Spirits of just men now made perfect, may wonder at us why we stand out so long? Oh! Will ye give to another your hearts, and not to precious Christ, who hath given you his heart, and who is worthy of all your hearts? Can you look upon that Noble Plant of Renown, and not give him your hearts, who had a hole made in his side, through which ye might see his heart? Oh Man! and oh Woman! Why will ye not give Christ your hearts? What shal ye say, when Christ shal say first to you, why would ye not sincerely give me one day in your lifetime? *Secondly*, Why would you not give me your hearts? I will tell you three things, which will be very terrible for you (O Atheists?) in that day when you shal appear before Gods Tribunal. First, the hearing of the Gos-

spel. Secondly, Which is more terrible, the resurrection of Christ: Lastly, Which is terriblest of all, when that fearful Sentence shal be pronounced against you, *Depart, Depart.* O then! you shal curse the day that ever ye were born in *Glasgow*, or in *Scotland*. Now, O you inhabitants of this place, I charge you (as ye shal answer one day to God) that ye would give him your hearts in keeping, and in so doing, ye shal have life eternal. O therefore, *Kiss the Son by the way, lest his anger break out, and ye perish for ever*; Now to him who can perswade your hearts to imbraace him, we desire to give praise.

## S E R M O N V I I.

*Prov. 4. 23. Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.*

**T**HERE is a great and vaste difference betwixt the heart of a Christian while he is on earth, herebelow, travelling in these Tents of mortality; and the heart of a Christian when he shal be above, taking up his eternal possession in those blessed and everlasting Tents of Immortality: And O! is it not a mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when those hearts of yours, which have been so unstedfast in the way of Godliness, that they shal once be made *as pillars in the house of your GOD, and no more to go out*: we may compare the heart of a Christian (while he is here below) unto *Reuben*, it is *unstable as water, which doth marr its excellency*; For a Christian (while he is here below) he is like the *Mo n*, changeable, and subject to many vicissitudes; but when he shal be above, he shal be as the *Sun*, having *the light of seven days*; and is not this a Mystery for you to believe that such a day is approaching, when these hearts of yours that have wearied so much in the service of God,

God, to whom prayer hath been a Cross, to whom the Worship of God in the publick Ordinances hath been a burden: I say, is it not a Mystery for you to believe that such a day is approaching, *when ye shall serve God night and day, without any wearying*? There is not such a voice heard in heaven as this, *this is a hard saying, who can hear it?* If it were possible that ye could ask that question at *Abel* if he desire to change his Estate, or his wearying to do God service ( he who of all the lost posterity of *Adam* was the first inhabitant of heaven ) he would disdain to return an answer to such a question it being without all ground or reason: And is not this a Mystery for you to believe, that such a day is approaching, when these hearts of yours that are now under so much darkness, such misconstructions of God, such misconceptions of the holy Majesty of God, and of the great Mysteries of the kingdom of heaven. I say, is it not a Mystery for you to believe that such a day is approaching, when your hearts shall be fully taught to comprehend those depths, and profound secrets of the kingdom of God, when the most brutish and darkest understanding that shall be made to resolve that question and mystery, how three can be in one, and how one can be in three? They shall then be able to resolve that profound mystery of the two natures in the person of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, and in that day your hearts shall be able to comprehend that blessed union that is amongst the persons of the blessed Trinitie; and likewise in that day ye shall be able to take up that blessed knot of union, which is betwixt Christ and Believers; And is not this a Mystery for you to believe that such a day is approaching, when your hearts that have been under such exercise of sorrow, that they shall be clothed with the garment of joy and praise? And I must ask of you, O what a Robe must that be, to be clothed with the garments of praise? It is a more excellent and glorious Robe than all the Robes of the great Kings and Emperours of the World. Did your eyes

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ever see such an excellent garment, as the garment of praise? There is a three-fold cloathing which a Christian shal put on, when first his heart shal enter into heaven, in that blessed day of the resurrection; *First*, he shal be cloathed with the Robe of the righteousness of Christ, and, O what must such a Robe as this be? *Secondly*, he shal be cloathed with the Robe and Garment of Immortality, and, O what a Robe and resplendent garment shal this be? And *thirdly*, in that day when first a Christian shal enter into heaven, he shal be cloathed with the garment of praise; and, O what an excellent and glorious Robe shal all these be? *when ye shall be brought to the King in rayment of needle work, and shall be made all glorious within.*

At the last occasion when we spake upon these words, we told you that there was four things contained in them; and the first was a duty imposed upon Christians, that they should keep their hearts; the second thing was, that there are many spiritual enemies, who study to gain, and conquer our hearts, which is presupposed in these words, *Keep thy heart.* The third thing is the qualifications which should be annexed to this precious and soul concerning duty holden forth in these words, *keep thy heart with all diligence*, or as the words may be rendered, with all keeping, or above all keeping. The last thing which was contained in the words, was, the spiritual advantages, which attends the exercises of that duty, or the reasons enforcing the duty, *for out of it are the issues of life*, that is the ground on which a Christian should walk, in perswading himself to the doing of this duty. Now as for the first thing, *viz.* the duty commanded, that we should keep our hearts: We have spoken several things from it, now there are only five things which we would speak to.

First, A Christian should study to keep his heart from the predominant lusts which dwell in it; it is of the concernment of a Christian to keep himself from all iniquities, but it is the special concernment of a Christian



to keep his heart.

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Christian to keep his heart from his predominant sins; this was the practice of David, *Psal. 18. 23. I have kept my self from mine iniquity*, which we conceive to be understood of his predominant lusts. There is not an idol or lust which a Christian hath in his heart, but he ought to offer it up to God, and to put a knife to the throat of his most pleasant *Isaac*; I will tell you of five great idols which a Christian hath no will to quite, and it is impossible for him to keep his heart till he quite them. First, A Christian hath no will to quite his religious idols, that is those idols, the loving of which is a commanded duty; but the immoderat love of which is an idol: as for instance, it is a great difficulty for a tender *Abraham*, to put a knife to the throat of his only Son *Isaac*, or for Parents to be denyed to their Children, and for an Husband to be denyed to his Wife; the loving of which is their duty, but the immoderat love of them is sin. Secondly, A Christian hath ill will to quite his advantageous idol, that idol in pursuit of which, he conceives there is outward advantage to be waiting upon it; as for instance, it is a great difficulty to perswade a covetous man to be denyed to his Riches, O! but that Divinity which is in *Prov. 23. 4.* It is the Divinity which the most part (or at least many) of the Christians now a-days, do not study to close with, or obey, *Labour not to be rich, &c.* There is a greater easiness and facility for one to quite his pleasant idols, than to quite his advantageous idols; as for example, a covetous person will sooner forsake his idols than his riches. Thirdly, A Christian hath ill will to quite his invisible idols, these idols that doth lodge within his heart; there is a greater easiness for a Christian to quite his visible, than to quite his invisible idols; Sometimes a person will forsake his drunkenness and cursing, which will not forsake his pride and lust; but it is of your concernment, to be as much take up in the mortification of invisible idols, as in the mortification of visible idols. Fourthly, A Christian hath difficulty to quite

quite these idols which he hath a natural inclination unto, besides the love which we have contracted to some predominant idols, by the reason of the constitution of mans body: there is some that hath a natural inclination to one idol more than to another; and to clear this, I would say this unto you, I presuppose some under these three predominant lusts. 1. That there are some under the predominant idol of love to the world. 2. That there are some under the predominant idol of pride. 3. That there are some under the predominant idol of lust, that is the idol that you have most natural inclination unto; assuredly you have greatest unwillingness to mortifie that idol. *Fifthly*, A Christian hath much difficulty to mortifie that idol, the forsaking of which hath great outward disadvantage waiting upon the forsaking thereof; as that young man in the Gospel, he could not endure that Doctrine, *Go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to the Poor, &c.* That was an idol which had much disadvantage (as he conceived) attending upon the forsaking of it, so that he could not imbrace such a Doctrine; but it is said, *He went away sorrowful, &c.* Cursed be that person which goeth away sorrowful, when Christ and an idol is put in the Ballance together, and whose heart consents rather to take the idol than Christ: I would only say this by the way to you. Are there not many here, that if they would tell that which is their practice, they might condemn themselves for this, that absence and distance with Christ, was never so great a burden to their Spirits as the want of the actual enjoyments and fruition of an idol; and doth not this speak that ye prefer your idols before Christ? *Not this Man, but Barrabas, is the cursed Divinity of many of your hearts.*

The second thing which I would speak to you, is this, a Christian should not delay to give Obedience to this precious and soul concerning command of keeping his heart: I know there are some that do not simply deny obedience to this Command, but they postpone the gi-

*ought to keep his heart.*

ving obedience unto it until another time. I would only say this to such, *boast not of to morrow for ye know not what a day will bring forth*; If ye keep not your hearts to day, it will be a great difficulty for you to keep them to morrow; Therefore follow the practice of David, *I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy Commandments* Psal. 115. 50. Amongst which we conceive he made haste to keep this Commandment of keeping his heart.

Thirdly, We would say this unto you of the duty of keeping your hearts if ye would keep your hearts aright, ye must entertain these four noble and excellent Guests within your hearts, otherwise there will be great difficulty for you: yea, an impossibility for to keep them. The first guest that must be dwelling in your hearts, is our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, he must dwell in your hearts by Faith. Secondly, The Word of God must dwell in your hearts by Love; and if once ye hide his word in your hearts, then ye would be helped to keep your hearts, and that with much advantage and gain. Thirdly, If ye would keep your hearts, the love of God must dwell in them; and if these were indeed your attainments, then we might pronounce that Sentence upon you. *The peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall keep (as in a Garrison) your hearts and minds in Jesus christ.* Fourthly, Ye should keep the fear and dread of God within your hearts. Study to live under the divine apprehension of the Omnipotent Majesty of God; we conceive the little taking up of the Omniscieny of God, of the Omnipotency of God, and of the Terrors of God, is both a great and special influence upon your neglect of the duties of keeping your hearts.

Fourthly, There is this which we would speak to from this duty of keeping the heart, and it is this. We that propose several things that ye would endeavour by all means, to keep your hearts from them. First, A Christian would study to keep his heart from the de-  
ceits

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ceits thereof, and from these strong delusions that it speaks. This is the great Mystery of iniquity, that even our hearts will deceive our own hearts, and study to bring them to ruine: *Take heed ye deceive not your selves, &c.* saith *Jeremy*; or as the word may be rendered, take heed ye deceive not your souls, *1 Cor. 3. 18.* *Let no man deceive himself, &c.* and *Gal. 6. 7.* *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, for what a man soweth, that shall be also reap.* It is certain there are many soul-destroyers, and self-deceivers amongst us, their hearts speaks peace to them, when there is no peace to them from God; and in speaking to this, that a Christian should keep his heart from the deceivings of his own heart, I shall speak a little to two things.  
1. What are these deceits that lodges in the heart of man?

And there is this first deceit of the heart of man, the most sinful thing that can be, we can put a favourable Title and name upon it, and there are few sins which any are lying under, but they can put a favourable Title upon them; Do not many call their presumption, faith? are there not many that call security, peace? Are there not many that call passion, Zeal? Are there not many that call their lukewarmness, and indifferency in the things of Godliness, their spiritual wisdom? And are there not many that call their misbelief, humility? Are there not many who call their vain prodigality, mortification to the things of a world? And likewise, are there not many which call their worldly mindedness, frugality? This was the deceit of *Jehu*, that called his proud loving of a kingdom zeal: *Come see*, saith he, *and behold my zeal for the Lord*, whereas if he had spoken the language of his own heart, he might have said, *Behold my zeal for my self.*

Secondly, There is this deceit of the heart of man, that the most excellent and choice things of God, our heart can put an unpleasant name and construction upon

on them; as for instance, are there not many who call tenderneſs, hypocriſie? and are there not many who call humility of ſpirit, ſtupidity? and are there not many who call zeal for God, raſhneſs? this was the cauſe that cauſed *Ahaz* to fall, he called believing in God, tempting of God: *I will not tempt God*, ſaith he, while in the mean time he was preſſed to faith in God; it is a curſed practice in the hearts of many, they put a falſe robe upon godlineſs, and ſtudies then to flee from it, juſt like the practice of the Jews, they put a ſcarlet robe upon *Chriſt*, and then mocked him.

There is this third deceit of the heart of many, that it doth preſent impediments and diverſions to hinder us from the exerciſe of duty. I would poſe you, O Chriſtians, when went ye to duty, but there was ſomething that your hearts propoſed a diverſion from the exerciſe of that duty? this is clear, *Prov. 26. The ſloutbful man ſaith, there is a Lion in the way, a Lionneſs in the ſtreets*: he preſents to himſelf an imaginary impediment to divert him from his duties; which words points out the folly of the excuſe, ſeing there uſes not to be Lions in the ſtreets, nor in the high ways, they frequenting more in ſolitary and deſert places; this is alſo clear in *Song 5. 3.* where the carnal and ſecure heart of the ſpouſe, when ſhe is called to open to *Chriſt*, ſhe preſents this impediment, *I have put off my coat, how ſhall I put it on? I have waſhed my feet, how ſhall I deſile them?* I ſhal only in ſpeaking of theſe impediments, which our curſed hearts do propoſe to divert us from duty, inſtance them in the exerciſe of prayer, that our hearts doth propoſe ſeveral impediments to divert us from that precious and ſoul concerning duty of prayer; and I ſhal name five impediments, which our curſed and carnal hearts doth preſent to hinder us from that duty after God hath preſented to us a golden opportunity for doing of the duty.

First, Our carnal heart doth propoſe this impediment.

diment, O say ye, I am not in a praying frame, and so I must desist from this duty of prayer at this time, I would say to such that desist from prayer, because they are not in a praying frame these two words; First, Do ye suppose the way to attain to a praying frame, is to desist from prayer? should ye not go to prayer, that ye may be helped to win to a praying frame? 2. Do ye never go to prayer, but when ye are in a praying frame? I suppose ye pray not once in a week then, and it is much if ye pray once in a month, if ye pray not but when ye are in a praying frame.

The second impediment is, our hearts tells us; it will be more advantage not to pray, than to pray; sometimes a Christian will be under that conviction, that he doth offend God more in prayer, than in desisting from prayer; and upon that account we do fold our hands, and neglect this duty. First, I would say this to such, it is indeed a sad and afflicting thing, the offending of God so much in prayer, but it is far sadder to give over prayer. Secondly, I would say this to such, I can hardly believe that ever ye can offend God so much in prayer, as by the total neglect of that duty.

There is this third impediment which our hearts doth propose to divert us from duties, and especially from the exercise and duty of prayer; we argue thus with our selves, we are not under the sensible necessity of what we need; and so we say, we will not go to God at this time, for if we pray under such a case, we will turn but complementers with God, we will but flatter him with our mouth, and lie to him with our tongue. I would say this to such, the best way to bring up your hearts to the sensible conviction of your necessity, is to be much in the exercise of prayer, a Christian must pray for sorrow of sin, if he want it; a Christian must pray for sense of necessity, if he wants it; and a Christian must pray for tenderness, when he wants it. Prayer is the universal Messenger, which we must



must constantly send to God for the supply of all our necessities: There is not a case which a Christian can be in, but Prayer may go to God as a Messenger for a remedy to such a case, when he stands in need.

The fourth impediment which our carnal hearts proposeth to divert us from prayer, is, our hearts are not under a right majestick apprehension of God, and so ye say, if we go to prayer at this time, we will be guilty of the third command, *in taking his holy Name in vain*. If we go to prayer at this time, saith our deceiving hearts, we will but run our selves into that sin, *to speak to God as to our companion*. I confess it is a sad thing to go to God without some Divine impression of his Sovereignty, and Majesty; and I would say this to you, I think it is one of the most sad and undeniable evidences of the little grace of God which is in the hearts of many, that constantly in their prayers they speak to God as to their companion, but I would ask this question at you, When went ye to prayer, but ye might find your hearts short-coming in the due apprehension of the Majesty of God.

The last impediment which our carnal hearts doth propose, to divert us from the exercise of prayer, is this, We say (many of us) that it is an inconvenient time for the exercise of that duty, therefore our hearts saith, that we should delay the time of praying till a more convenient season, according to that practice in Hag. 1. 2. *The time is not come, the time that the Lords house should be built*. It is the cursed practice of our hearts, that when God presents an occasion to pray, we delay praying at that time, under the expectation of a more convenient season for going about that duty; just like that word which Felix spoke to Paul, we speak that to our occasion; O! occasion that is presented to me, to pray in, *Go away at this time, and at a more convenient season I will call for thee again*! I would say this to these which doth so much slight the opportunities presented to them to pray,

pray, I would only say these three words unto you, who doth so; First, What know ye, even ye which slight the call of God to go about prayer? What know ye, I say, but that may be the last call from Heaven that ever ye shall get to pray? I would have Christians, and all of you that are here, meditating upon this, that when occasion is presented to you, ye might argue thus with your selves, I must embrace this occasion, for I know not but this may be the last occasion. Secondly, I would say this to you which slight your occasions to pray; when the next occasion is presented to you, ye will be more unfit for the exercise of Prayer; and when the convenient time that ye did propose to your selves is come, ye will then defer it till another time. Thirdly, I would say this unto you, who slight these golden opportunities that are presented to you to pray in, know this for a certainty, the slighting of occasions is a disobedience to the Commandment of God: Would ye know what are occasions to pray? They are even Gods call, inviting you to go about that duty, and if you slight that occasion, the call of God is slighted by you.

There is this fourth deceit of the heart of man, which we would press you to study to eschew, and it is, the heart of Man studies by all means to extenuate sin, and make it seem little, when it is not so; this is one of the great deceits of the heart, according to that of Solomon, *So is the man that deceiveth his neighbour*; and he will add that as an excuse, *was I not in sport?* I will tell you three great faults which are incident to Christians: First, There are some that look upon their perfections through a multiplying glass, their perfections appear to be more than they are. The Church of *Laodicea* was guilty of this fault, supposing her self to have attained to much perfection, and to great length in duties, when indeed she had attained to nothing. Secondly, there are some, they

they look upon their sins through an extenuating glass; they are like the unjust Steward, when they owe an hundred Talents, they go and write down fifty. Thirdly, their iniquities which they are convinced of, and are forced to charge upon themselves, they study to extenuate them, and saith, *Is it not a little one?* and so they desire it to be spared.

The last deceit of the heart is, the heart doth oftentimes preach peace, when there is no peace from God. I am perswaded of this, let all the persons that are within these doors, be asked of that question, whether or not they have faith in God, or peace with God? I suppose there are not many, but their hearts would say, they have peace with God: O that is a damnable deceit of the heart, that oftentimes it preaches peace to a man or woman, where there is no peace to them from God. I shall only, to make this deceit to appear more lively in its native colours, say this of it, First, That it is a most mysterious and strong deceit of heart that will so speak peace to a man: Sometimes the word will speak war to a man, and yet his heart will speak peace to him: And O, is not that a mysterious deceit, that I suppose if an Angel from Heaven would preach that Doctrine to you, that there is no peace betwixt God and you; many of your hearts would (for all that) preach and speak peace to your selves. And secondly, this makes it a most mysterious deceit, that sometimes your consciences doth declare and preach to you that you are not at peace with God, yet over the belly of that assertion, your hearts will preach peace to you. Thirdly, this makes it a most mysterious deceit, that notwithstanding your lives and conversations, that they testify to your selves and others, that you are at enmity with God, yet your hearts will preach peace to you.

Now the second thing that we would say to you from this, viz. That a Christian should keep his heart from the deceivings of his own heart, and it is this,

this, ye would mainly guard against discouragements, this our blessed Lord Jesus presses, *John 14. 1. Let not your hearts be troubled, &c.* And it is clear, this is dehorted, *Phil. 4. 6. Be careful for nothing, &c.* and in *Psal. 42. 5. David doth* (as it were) expostulate with his own soul for being discouraged and cast down. Now in speaking to this, that a Christian should guard against discouragements. I shall speak unto two things, and the first shall be to the rise of discouragements, and from whence it doth spring. And secondly, I shall speak to some considerations to pre's this upon you, that ye would keep your selves from discouragement.

And first, we conceive that discouragement it arises from this, when a Christian hath no visible victory over his Idols, then his discouragement comes apace upon him: A Christian after long wrestling with his Idols, lusts and corrupcions, and hath little victory over them, he is prone, and ready to draw that sad conclusion, *There is no hope, but that once he shall fall by the hand of some of his idols.*

The second rise of discouragement, is, from Christs withdrawing of the sensible manifestations of his love, and of his presence, *Psal. 30. 7. Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.* And it is clear, in the practice of the Disciples, the withdrawing of Christs bodily presence, it made sorrow to fill their hearts. I confess there are not many which are sick of the disease of discouragement under absence from Christ, but however it hath been the reason of his Disciples discouragement, when Christ for many dayes had absented himself from them.

Thirdly, this is the rise of discouragement, when a Christian hath no return of his prayers, *Lam. 3. 8. compared with verse 18. where in verse 8. he crys out, when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer, and verse 18. he draws that sad conclusion, my hope and my strength is perished from the Lord.* The not getting re-  
turns

turns of prayer hath been an occasion of much disputing the good will of God, and a foundation of much discouragement to his own people.

Fourthly, this is the rise of discouragement, when a Christian doth interpret the sad and afflicting dispensations of God, and he conceives that there is nothing but wrath speaking to him therein, then he falleth into a great fit of discouragement, as in *Lam. 3. 17.* compared with *verse 18.* where the rise of his discouragement was the misinterpreting of the sad dispensations of God.

Fifthly, this is the Rise of a Christians discouragement, when he is made to possess the iniquities of his youth, and all the terrors of God seem to be called, as in a solemn assembly round about him. O, then he taketh on a great fit of discouragement.

Now to that which secondly we shall speak to, is to propose some considerations unto you, to guard against discouragement.

The first shall be this, these that have a heart that is under the spirit of bondage and discouragement, they cannot pray as they ought, discouragement makes prayer a most unpleasant duty, as is clear, *Psalm 77. I am so troubled that I cannot speak.* Discouragement (as it were) hinders and obstructs the exercise of Prayer. Secondly, discouragement doth exceedingly interrupt the exercise of faith, as in *Psalm 42. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou discouraged within me? trust in God, for I shall yet praise him for the health of his countenance.* The Psalmist (as it were) speaks a difference (if not an opposition) betwixt the disquieting and faith: if ye would not interrupt the lively acting of faith, ye would study to guard against discouragement, that ye do not sit down and draw desperate conclusions against your selves. I know ye may call a Christian *Marah* now, because he is indeed under bitterness; but the day

day is approaching when we may call a Christian *Nammi*, when he shall be comforted with the consolations of God.

The third consideration to press you to guard against discouragement, is, there is no dutie that a Christian is called to when he is under discouragement, but it makes it a burthen to him; according to that word, *Jer. 20. 9.* discouragement brought forth that resolution, then I said, *I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his Name, &c.* A soul that is under the exercise of faith, moves swiftly as the Chariots of *Aminadab*; but a soul that is under the exercise of discouragement, moves as the Chariots of *Pharaoh*, heavilie.

Lastlie, there is this consideration, to press you to guard against discouragement, and it is this, misbelief and discouragement is the mother of Apostacie, as is clear, *Lam. 1. 8.* *she sighed*, and what followed upon that? *and turned backward*: And it is no wonder discouragement grow big with child of Apostacie, because it makes duties become tasteless.

Now the rest of the things which we would have a Christian keeping his heart from, we shall onlie but name them brieflie unto you. The third frame that a Christian should keep his heart from, is from an impatient frame, he should studie to make his heart keep silence to anie cross that comes to him from the hand of God. Fourthlie, he should keep his heart from a lusting frame, not to be taken up in an immoderat pursuit after the things of the world. Fifthlie, he should keep his heart from an untender frame, he should studie always to keep his heart tender, that he may have that divine softness, that his heart may melt, likewise he is to keep his heart from an unpraying frame, to be at everie occasion in a fit temper of spirit, for the dutie of prayer. Lastlie, he is to keep his heart from a secure frame, always to be upon the watch-tower, and wait for the motions of Christ:  
and



and there are three things, the motions of which a Christian should take up. First, he should take up the motions of Christ, to hear if he can take up the motions of the sound of Christs feet coming over the mountains of *Bether*. Secondly, he should take up the motions of his conscience, that he may not be sleeping when sin awakes. Thirdly, he should take up the motions of the heart, to see what frame it is in: A Christian should be able to write a Diurnal of his own heart, that in such an hour of such a day, I was in a believing frame, and in such an hour of such a day I was in a discouraged frame, and in such an hour of such a day, I sought him whom my soul loveth, and in such an hour of such a day, he brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. The sum of all is, if ye would keep your hearts, ye must give Christ them to keep, for that is the best way to keep them well; it is only to Christ ye must commit the keeping of them: Ye know man had but his heart a short time in keeping, and he lost it; and I shall be fore I close, because it is the great design of the preaching of the Gospel, give you five considerations that may provoke you to give your hearts to Christ.

The first consideration is, will ye consider the matchless and transcendent excellency which is in precious Christ; O doth not that transcendent beauty preach, *My son give me thy heart, Psal. 24. 7.* The Psalmist presseth opening to Christ upon this account, *List up your heads, O ye everlasting doors and gates.* And what is the argument wherewith he presseth it? and the *King of glory shall come in.* I would only ask this at you (O ye hard hearted) is it not marvellous presumption for you to refuse the precious offers of such a glorious King?

The second consideration to press you to give your hearts in keeping to Christ, take a view & a comprehensive look of the precious acts of the infinite condescensions

sons of Christ: Doth not his coming down from heaven preach that Doctrine, *My son give me thy heart?* Doth not his being born under the Law, preach that Doctrine, *My son give me thy heart?* And doth not his being born in so low a condition preach that doctrine, *My son give me thy heart?* And if nothing will perswade you to give your hearts to Christ, ye would take a look of those five wounds which he received in his blessed body; First, doth not the wound that he received in his right hand, preach this *My son, give me thy heart?* Secondly, doth not the wound that he got in his left hand, preach this Doctrine, *My son give me thy heart?* Thirdly, doth not the wound that he received in his precious side, preach this soul-concerning Doctrine, *My son, give me thy heart?* And likewise, doth not the wounds which he received in his blessed legs, preach this Doctrine, *My son, give me thy heart?* O! were ye never constrained to wish for ten thousand hearts, to ware and bestow upon him? Oh! What hearts have ye, which refuses the offers of so noble and condescending a Prince?

The third consideration is, if ye will look upon these things which intreat you to give Christ your hearts, ye cannot but give them unto him. Christ cries, O! come and give me your hearts, necessity cries, O! go and give Christ your hearts: and we say likewise, O give Christ your hearts to keep.

The fourth consideration is, will ye look upon these unspeakable disadvantages which attends those that will not give their hearts to Christ. I would say this by the way, there are two ballances upon which we weigh our hearts. First, some weigh their hearts in the ballance of the Sanctuary, and they are found light. Secondly, some weigh their hearts in the ballance of deceit, and they are found without fault: But now I say this to the persons which will not give their hearts to Christ, I defy all the Angels in Heaven to speak forth their unspeakable disadvantages, yea sense shall be the best

best Preacher of it in that day: and I shal name these three inexpressible disadvantages to you. First, If ye give not Christ your hearts, Christ shal be your eternal enemy: and in the contrair to that precious Doctrine which he once preached, *Come unto me*, he shal pronounce that sad sentence against you, *Depart from me*; and therefore as ye would not engage Christ to be your eternal enemy, ye would give him your hearts. O, the Gospel vengeance of a crucified Saviour, will be more terrible, sad and fearful, than the vengeance of the Law, Christ is the best friend, and the most terrible foe. The second disadvantage is, ye shal be eternally shut out from the enjoyment of the blessed Company of Angels, and from the souls of just men made perfect, and O, therefore meditate and consider upon this, what it is to be separated from the Father, the first person of the blessed Trinity; and from the Son, the second person of the blessed Trinity; and from the Holy Ghost, the third person of the blessed Trinity; and from all the blessed Society which are in heaven. And the last disadvantage is, ye shal be kept under these everlasting chains, even all of you which will not give your hearts to Christ. If ye be not under this everlasting chain of love, ye shal be under these everlasting chains of wrath. I suppose the most stout hearted sinner here, if he could but a moment hear the screehings of the damned (if it were granted to him) he would not delay to give his heart to Christ.

The last Consideration is, O, consider these infinit eternal and unchangeable advantages that those have which gives their hearts to Christ, we conceive if all the Angels in heaven would preach together upon the unspeakable blessedness of the Saints in heaven, they would always close their sentences with this, It is unspeakable joy which attends those that are admitted to that blessed life. There are five things

which are unchangeable to Christians; and five things which are unchangeable to Reprobats; There is this first, which is unchangeable to the Saints: (I mean not here) their communion with God shal be unchangeable; for after they shal win to heaven, they shal be under a continual and blessed emanation of Christs presence; Secondly, they shal have an unchangeable love. A Christians love while he is here; is like unto the moon, subject to many vicissitudes, and alterations; but afterwards when they shal be in heaven, their love shal be unchangeable. Thirdly, His holiness shal then be unchangeable, when once he shal put on the robe of Christs righte usness, he shal then sing that song, *O death! where is thy sting! And O grave! where is thy victory?* Fourthly, praise to God shal be unchangeable; O, what a pleasant sight shal it be to see the souls of just men made perfect, with harps in their hands singing these pleasant songs unto God most sweetly? *Hallelujah to him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb which lives for ever; their tongue is made like the pen of a ready writer*, there is not such a complaint uttered by Moses in heaven, *I am a man of slow speech*: neither doth Jeremiah now complain, *I am a child, and cannot speak*. Fifthly, desires after God shal be unchangeable; a Christian while he is here below, will desire God now, and within a little while he will desire his idols; but then when he shal be above, his desires after God shal be unchangeable.

And upon the contrary, there are five things unchangeable in the lot of a Reprobat, and of these that will not give Christ their hearts. First, Their separation from God shal be unchangeable; when once they shal go down into the pit, there shal be no hope of coming up again: Ah? ye would think upon this, what a life shal it be, to be under the eternal excommunication from Christs presence? O but if ye knew Christ, and believed what a one he were, ye would close

close with him ? 2. The Reprobat shal have an unchangeable sorrow, O he may be sad, when the vengeance of God shal be squeezing the marrow out of his bones, and when he is eternally shut up in these horrible flames, and out of them to have no redemption ? 3. Reprobats, they shal have an unchangeable hatred against God, and God shal have an unchangeable hatred against them, and I cannot wish a greater misery to any, than for Christ to have an unchangeable hatred against them. Fourthly, ye that are aliens from God, ye shal sin unchangeably, ye shal never cease to sin, and ye shal never cease to be tormented; on these two eternity shal be spent. Lastly, Your inward anxiety and torturing of conscience shal be unchangeable; that worm shal never die, but shal eternally gnaw your conscience.

Now what shal we say more? we have set life and death before you, and whether of them will ye embrace? O that ye would embrace Christ even precious Christ, and give over your hearts to that blessed Lord: It is like in these days that the Devil hath purchased many Harpers to himself, to sing that song, *I am not far from victory*: The curse of a crucified Saviour shal eternally come down upon the heads of these that will not give their hearts to Christ, and to you that will give, or hath given their hearts to Christ, the eternal blessing of Christ shal come upon your hearts. Behold the day is coming (O Atheist!) when ye would give ten thousand worlds for one invitation of the Gospel again: and ye would be content to bide ten thousand years in hell for one Preaching, and it shal be denyed to you. O! therefore do not withstand Christs offers: Take him, ye will get him for a look: and know, that if ye will not love him now, his heart shal burn with hatred against you; and one day ye shal curse your cursed hearts for that hatred ye bare to him. Now to him who intreats you to embrace his offer, be praise.

## S E R M O N VIII.

*Isaiah 6. 9. The Lords voice cryeth unto the City, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name, bear ye the Rod, and who hath appointed it.*

**I**T is a question that is hard to determine, whether the greatness of God, or the condescendency of God be the greatest Mystery; but O! when both these are put together, they make up a matchless mystery. What is more dreadful than power which cannot be resisted? and what is more terrible than wisdom from which nothing can be hid? And yet what is more sweet, than the love wherewith he hath loved us, and the unchangeableness thereof, which doth cut off all suspicion? I would only say this unto you, God hath been speaking to you divers ways, and by different things, and as the Apostle speaks, *There are many voices in the world, and every voice hath its own signification.* So I may say, there is not a voice, by which God speaks to you, that needs not to be a *Barbarian speaking in an unknown tongue.*

I confess it is sad, that when God condescends to speak unto us so many different ways, that there should be so many which should stop their ears; are there not some to whom Christ hath piped, and they have not danced? And now he is beginning to mourn to you, and oh! will ye not lament? I would say this to you, the day may be approaching when *Glossy Rods* shall be preachers, and its crosser teachers from the Lord. Yes, God is beginning to Preach that word to you, which is in *Jer. 2. 21. O Generation, see the word of the Lord, &c.* if ye will not hearken to God, in the voice and mouth of his preachers, he will send a more severe preacher



cher unto you, and ye shal be forced to hear his voice. I say, look that the contempt of Christ in his Rods, in his ordinances, and in his offers, make not this place an *Aceldama*; a field of blood, and a *Golgotha*, the place of dead mens skulls. I say to you, the day may be approaching when ye shal meet with these six silent things from God. First, when ye shal meet with silent Rods, when ye shal not know nor understand the language of them, when they shal speak to you in a strange and profound language, which ye shal not understand. Secondly, when ye shal meet with a silent God, when ye shal cry to him, and he shal not hear you. Thirdly, when you shal meet with silent and dumb ordinances, which shal not speak unto you. Fourthly, when ye shal meet with silent mercies, that all the good things he doth unto you, ye shal not know the language of them. Fifthly, when you shal meet with the sad lot of a silent conscience, when ye shal not be reproved by it, when ye sin, but God shal not give you leave to fall and depart, and not to return. And lastly, when ye shal meet with silent commands, with silent threatnings, and with silent promises, that is, ye shal never know what the promises calls for, what the threatning calls for, nor what the commands calls for, when he shal chastise you in the dark, and there shal be none to deliver you, and when there shal be none to plead your cause, but a sin revenging God entering the lists with you; when he shal say to them that are left, do not pray for this people, nor interceed for them, for they are the people upon whom I will have no mercy. I may say by all appearance, our judgment doth speak this. He hath spoken to us in the still voice of the Gospel, and he hath spoken to us in the whirl-wind, and yet he is in none of them: but what know ye but God may the next time speak to you closing himself in

a circle of fire; I have sometimes spoken that word to you, *Awake, awake, O-sleepers, and call upon your God.*

But to come to the words, in this Chapter, the prophet hath been leading a sad process against this people, for the neglect of duties which were lying at the door, and now we have in this verse the conclusion of it, and the scope whereof is this, shewing the people that the Lord would send a more sharp message if they will not obey. And in it there are four things considerable.

First, We have an excellent exhortation given to hear the rod, and by it, is not only meant to take up what the Rod speaks, but also, *Who hath appointed it.*

Secondly, There is that excellent consideration to press them unto it, it is *the Lords voice*, we may say that of the Rod, which was said of *Herod* in another sense, *it is the voice of God, and not of man.*

Thirdly, We have the people to whom the Exhortation is given; and it is *unto the City*, that is, *to Samaria*, and to the bordering Towns thereabout; now the reason why the Lords voice cryeth unto the City rather than to the Countrey, the reason of it is either this the City ordinarily hath most eminent tokens of the mercies and respects of God, which being abused, makes God especially to contend with them; or else because of this, ordinarily most prophanity is broached within the City, and doth vent it self thence into the Countrey, according to that word which is spoken of *Jerusalem*, *that from it prophanity goes out unto the Countrey or whole Land.*

The fourth thing in the words, is the persons that will hear the voice of the Rod, the Lords voice, and it is, *The man of wisdom shall see thy Name*, or as the word may be rendered, the man of substance, or of substantial Wisdom; which speaks, that it is one of the greatest follies that

that is imaginable; not to hear the voice of the Lord, and his threatning Rod.

The last thing in the words, is the way how the man of wisdom wins to the right use-making and understanding the voice of the Rod, and it is by seeing his Name: now by the name of God may be either understood the seeing of the Authority of God in his threatnings; or by the Name of God may be understood, His Wisdom, His Peace, His Power, His Justice, His Sovereignty, and His Holiness, the man of Wisdom shall see these five excellent Attributes of God shining into the Rod; and in every sad dispensation which he meets with, and the reason of using that expression, *he shall see*, is to point out these certain and distinct discoveries which the man of wisdom shall have by such a cross.

Now having thus made plain the words unto you, there are three things which we shall speak a little unto from the scope, before we come to the first thing in the words:

The first thing which we shall take notice of from the scope, is this, That the slighting of known duties is the forerunner of some sad and lamentable stroke from the Lord upon a person or people; these things which they know to be duties, and yet they slight and disobey them, I say, it is the fore-runner of some sad and eminent act of the displeasure of God to a person or people. This is clear, *Luke 12. 47. That servant which knoweth his Lords will, and prepareth not himself, neither doth according to his will shall be beaten with many stripes.* And that word in *Jer. 2. 6. I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God, &c.* yet it is said of these, they have also together broken the yoke, and burst the bonds. And what follows? *verse 6. Wherefore a Lyon out of the Forrest shall slay them, Rom. 8. 21, 26.* Where they professed themselves

to know, and yet they glorify him not as God. This is given as a reason, That he gave them up to a reprobate mind, to do things not convenient. It is probable the impiety and prophanity of people is come to a wonderful height, when they can sin against light and knowledge. Now in speaking to this more fully, I shal speak to some aggravations of the sin of slighting known duties.

The first Aggravation is, when a person slight duty after the sinfulness of that sin hath been discovered unto him, and engraven on his conscience. O, that is a mighty aggravation of that sin, that is clear, *Eis. 5. 2. And the revellers are profound to make slaughter, though I have been a rebuker of them all. Neh. 9. 29. And have testified against them, yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not to thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgment.* I confess, sinning against convictions of conscience (especially when they are sharp) is a greater sin than to sin against light, this is indeed to sin with a lifted up hand, and not to blush, nor be ashamed, nor yet be afraid to commit iniquity. Know now therefore there are many here that slight known duties, notwithstanding of light, and the convictions of conscience, which they have had for doing so. I would only say to that person, be afraid and stand in awe, lest the day may be approaching, when God shal cease to be a seprover unto you, and the reins shal be laid on your own neck, and you shal be as a wild ass snuffing up the wind.

The second Aggravation of slighting known duties, is when a person slights known duties, after God hath been discovering discontent with another person for that sin; when we see the justice of God overtaking another person for slighting of a known duty, and yet the person which stands beside, is not afraid to persist in the same sin, this is clear, *Jer. 3. 8. And I saw, when for all these causes, whereby back-sliding*

ding Israel committed adultery, I had put her away, and gave her a bill of divorce: yet her treacherous sister Judah feared not, but went and played the harlot also. As if he had said, though Judah have beheld what I have done to Israel for her whorish carriage, yet notwithstanding of this, she went and played the harlot also. I confess this is a greater aggravation than the former, and it speaks that such a sinner (in a manner) hath given a defiance to the justice of God, and hath cryed out (in a manner) I care not what God will do, I will do my pleasure.

The third Aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties is, when persons slight known duties after God hath begun to contend with them for so doing, this is a mighty aggravation of sin, as is clear in *Isai. 57. 17.* For the iniquitie of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. A froward son hath had the Rod shaken over his head, and hath drank something of the justice of God, for slighting such a duty, yet to persist in it, O that is a scarlet and mighty transgression, and yet are there not many here who are such?

The fourth Aggravation of slighting known duties, is, when a person slights known duties upon very small temptations; is not this certain, a word of a temptation, the half of a word, yea the very nod of a temptation will put us from the doing of known duties? Yea, sometimes we will be glad of a temptation to divert us from the exercise of duties; yea, sometimes it is known, when temptations are not present to divert us from the exercise of known duties, we will go forth and seek a temptation. I confess the Devil needs not be at much pains in these days, there are many which gives the Devil work and imployment; yea, and if he seek not them, they will seek him.

The fifth Aggravation of the sin of slighting known duties, is, when persons do not so much as set about

about well doing of them, that is a great aggravation, this is clear, Luke 12. 47. *He that knows his matters will, and doth it not, neither doth prepare himself to do it, is worthe of double stripes.* He will not take pains to prepare his heart for duties, that is a mighty aggravation. Some they are content to be under their fetters, as though they were bound of God; some they are content to live under their convictions, as though it were impossible for them to answer them, and they say, *there is no hope.*

The sixth Aggravation of slighting known duties, is when a person slights known duties after God hath commended the beauty and excellency of such duties; that is no doubt, a great aggravation; as when God doth commend prayer, and discovers the beautie thereof to a Christian, O, then it is a sad and lamentable thing for that person to sit down and slight his duty, that is, (as it were) to slight prayer when it hath on all its ornaments.

The seventh Aggravation of slighting known duties, is, when persons slight duties after they have been convinced of the advantage which waits upon the doing of them. Are there not some that slight Prayer, notwithstanding they have been convinced that Prayer hath been to them a Mount *Tabar*, in which they have seen Christ transfigured? Some they will slight Prayer, after they have been convinced that Prayer hath been a trysting place betwixt Christ and them; and after they have been convinced, that prayer hath been at the top of Mount *Pisgab*, on which they have gotten a view of the promised Land: O! that is a notable aggravation of slighting of known duties, when the person hath this to say, now I am slighting my own advantage.

There is this last Aggravation, when a person slights known duties, yet with very little resentment and grief of heart: Are there not many persons



persons that have slighted their morning Prayers here to day, and yet have not convictions thereof? And are there not many persons here to day, that oftentimes go to bed without saying their prayers, and yet have as much peace of Conscience, as if they had done it? I think a person hath gone a great length in hardness of heart, when he can slight known duties, and yet not be grieved; yea, and it is a token that they have not only to do with a hardened Conscience, but with a hardened will. Are there not many persons, that notwithstanding of the slighting of known duties, yet never had a broken heart therefore? Doth not the misbeliever slight the commandment of faith, and yet not weep for it? Doth not the secure Christian slight the commandment of Prayer, and yet not be grieved therefore? Doth not the presumptuous sinner slight self-examination, and yet is not much grieved? And doth not the dissolute sinner, that is under the power of his idols, slight the commandment of mortification, and yet not have a sore heart for it?

Now the second thing to which I shall speak from the scope is, I shall propose some considerations to press you to the exercise of all known duties.

The first consideration, Is the Christian which practiseth, and not the Christian which knoweth, to whom the promises are made: would ye know the Christian which hath a right to the promises? It is not the Christian which knoweth his duty, but it is the Christian that doth his duty; This is clear in *Mat. 7. 21.* *Not that everie one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.* I think if the promises had been annexed to the knowledge of duties, then doubtless *Balaam* had been in Heaven: It is not the knowing Christian, but it is the practising Christian, to whom the promises are made.

The

The second consideration to press you to the exercise of known duties, it is the Christian that is taken up in practising, and not the knowing Christian that is blessed; would ye know the blessed Christian? it is not he that knows his duty only, but it is he which knoweth his duty and doth it; according to that word, *Joh. 13. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* Where ye may see happiness is annexed to doing, and not to knowing: I confess, if ye could speak your duty like an Angel, and if ye know the smallest command in Scripture to be a command lying at your door, yet if ye do it not ye shall never be blessed. O! know it, there are many knowing persons in hell to day.

The third consideration to press you to practise, it is the practising Christian, and not the knowing Christian that is approved and commended of God; This is clear, *Song 7. 1. How beautiful are thy feet with shoes; O Princes daughter, &c.* Christ takes first notice of the Brides feet, which is her practice, and commends her for that; believe it, Christ commends a Christians feet more than his eyes, that is, his practice more than his knowledge; it is the practising Christian which shall have that word spoken to him in the day of the Lord, *well done good and faithful servant*; it is not said, *well known good and faithful servant*; but it is said, *Well done*; for if you never know so much, and yet not practise it, Christ will never commend you.

The fourth consideration to press you to the doing of known duties, it is not the knowledge but the practice of duties, which will give peace to a Christians Conscience, if ye would know all the Commandments in the Bible, and yet never do one of them, it is nothing; it is not your knowledge that will give your conscience peace. I say this to you, many their knowing and their slighting of duty in one day, will make their conscience roar like a Lion, and they have nothing

nothing to answer it. I say unto you, O Christians, if ye would have peace of Conscience in the great and terrible day of the Lord, then practise what ye know, and desire to know what ye ought to practise.

The fifth consideration, it is the practice of your duty, and not the knowledge of your duty, by which ye rise up in conformitie with God; It is the practising of what ye know, and not the knowledge of what ye should do, that raises you up in conformity with him; If ye know all that ye should do, and do it not, ye may be strangers to God in respect of conformity with him, as if ye were meer ignorant. I wish there were in these days less knowledge and more practice; or rather I wish there were more knowledge and practice both together. I think the Christians of this time, they sin against a witness in Heaven, and a witness against their own conscience; I think there are some (but few amongst us) in these dayes that sinne out of ignorance; but I would say this, the person that sins out of knowledge, condemns himself; but the person that sins out of ignorance, the Law condemns him.

There is this thirdlie that I would say to you from the scope, I would have you observing these six things concerning known duties.

And 1. Many persons are more desirous to know what they should do, than to do what they know: some persons cry out, *where with shall I come before the Lord?* and the Lord may answer them with this, *Have not I shewed thee, O man?*

There is this 2 thing which I would have you knowing, the question which shall be proposed to you in the great and notable day of the Lord, it shall not be, O man what knowest thou? but it shal be, O man, what didst thou? This shal be the question which Christ shall put home to you in that day, what didst thou in thy lifetime, & not what knewest thou in thy lifetime,

3. I would say this, believe it, a grain weight of sincerity and practice, is worth a talent of knowledge; It is better to practise as the weakest Christian, than to know as the most excellent Angel, not practising what we know; Christ weighs not our graces by quantity, but by quality: not by degrees, but by the truth and reality of them; I say, if thou knew never so much, a grain weight of sincerity and practice in Gods sight, is more worth than it all: if thou wert as eloquent as *Apollo*, and as wise as *Solomon*, and could, ye speak with as many tongues as *Paul*, and if ye knew and understood all mysteries, yet if ye do not practise your duties, it is all to no purpose.

Fourthly, I would say this, the slighting of known duties hath many sad disadvantages waiting upon them, and I shall name these four unto you. First, The slighting of duties, it is that which makes Christians weary in duties; is there any person here that slights duties at such and such a time, I prophesie this to thee, thou shalt weary of duties ere long: this is clear, *Isai. 43. 22. But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob, but thou hast been wearie of me, O Israel.* I say, slighting of duties, and wearying in duties, they will not be long asunder. Secondly, slighting of known duties brings on much hardness and stupidity of heart, according to that word in *Nehem. 9. 16.* where disobedience and hardness of heart are knit together; would ye know the reason why so many persons are under so much drowsiness, and under so many bonds? It is because they slight known duties. Thirdly, The slighting of known duties doth these three things to our conscience; It either mars the peace of conscience, or else it hardens the conscience. Or thirdly, it lulls our conscience asleep. I wonder how any of us can call our selves tender, since there is so much slighting of that we ought to do. Are there not many Christians, which may soon tell all their private Prayers that they make to God? There is a fourth disadvantage

vantage which waits on the slighting of known duties, and it is this, the Christian who slight duty, sometimes that duty which a Christian doth, it is exceeding formal: There are some Christians which slight prayer one day, and the second day, and it is one to a hundred the third day when that Christian prays, but it be meer formality. Q. what makes Christians pray so weakly? It is because they teach their hearts the Art of praying formally, by slighting of duty.

Fifthly, I would say this to you, the slighting of known duties is the first step of the sin against the Holy Ghost, this is clear in *Heb. 12. 26.* *For, if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sin.* I'll tell you what is betwixt the sin of slighting known duties, and the sin against the Holy Ghost; there is no more betwixt them both but that word *wilfulness*; and what knows thou but thy slighting of duties may come to wilfulness ere long? Ye would know this, that under the Law there was sacrifices for sins of Ignorance, and likewise for sins of *Infirmities*, but there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sins; now if this be the first step towards the sin against the Holy Ghost, I am sure there are some here, which have gone this length, yea, and I fear a little further: Now will ye take home this conviction, and I will say this, let the person which is not guilty of this offence amongst us. take up the first stone and cast at us. I suppose our Conscience might accuse us, and we might steal out one by one. O! the dreadful disadvantages which attend that person that slights known duties? This is a strange thing, our consciences are no more moved at what one can speak of that which is our sin indeed, than though it did not concern us; I suppose there is not  
one

one here, but they may write this on their fore-heads,  
*Guilty, Guilty.*

Now there is this lastly which I would say unto you, the day is coming when the slights of known duties shall be forced to cry out, *Ah!* that I had been an idiot and had never known my dutie. I confess the slighting of known duties, and the sinning against light shall be a mighty aggravation of our sin. O! what terror was it to Judas conscience, when he came to think of this, *I sold my Master, and I know I have sinned in so doing.* And O! what terror likewise will it be to you, when ye shall be convinced of this, my conscience told me that this was my dutie, and I would not do it.

Now the next thing which we shall speak to from the words in general, is, that God (in the depth of his condescendency) hath manie various ways in making known duties unto a person or people, this is clear from the words, where God having pressed duties upon his people by the voice of his Ministers, now he sends a more sad and terrible Preacher to them, *even a threatening Rod.* Now this is clear, that God hath manie wayes in pressing people to their duties. *Isa. 5. 4. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it, &c.* This is also eminentlie clear in *Song 5. 2. Open to me my sister, my spouse.* And if that will not do, he will knock at the door, and say, *It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh;* and if this will not do it, he will use arguments to perswade her, *Open to me, my sister; Is not that an argument?* Yea he will give her another, *For my bread is filled with dew, and my hair with the drops of the night;* And if all these will not do it, Christ will put in his hand at the holt of the door, which speaks this, that Christ in the depths of his condescendency, leaves nothing unessayed, to press people to their duty. This is all clear, *Deut. 32. 26, 27, 28.* where he sets life and death, blessings and cursings before



fore them, to press them to their duty. I confess there are many in Heaven to day that Christ never took the half of the pains on them, as he hath taken on some of us, and there are many in hell to day, upon whom Christ took never half so much pains as he hath done on some of us; and is it not then a wonder, that we are not sent away to hell likewise? Now I will tell you six great voices or means wherewith God presseth people to their duty.

The first voice is, the voice of threatnings: all the threatnings which is in the Scripture, this is the voice of them all: O! give obedience to your Duty. This is remarkably clear, from that choice and remarkable place, 36. verse 3, 6, 7. *Therefore go thou and read the roll which thou hast written from my mouth, &c. Baruch*, he is commanded to read all the threatnings of God to his people: and what is the precious end he hath before? *It may be they will present their supplications before the Lord, and will return every one from his evil way, &c.* This is the very end and scope of Gods Threatnings, that persons may present there Prayers before him, and he will shake the Rod over our heads for this end. Therefore I say, give the Threatnings of God (which are his messengers) that which they require, and it is, to put the Rod by the door.

The second great Voice whereby God sometimes presseth home duties upon folk, is by the Voice and Rod of these sad afflicting dispensations which we meet with. This is indeed the end of them, that persons would give obedience to this command of God, this is clear in the very scope, where he presseth them to *bear the voice of the Rod*, that they might give obedience to their duty. And it is also clear from that sweet and excellent promise, *Ezek. 20. 3, 7. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the Covenant.* I say, the very great end and design of God in sending Rods, is, that persons may be engaged to their duty.

The

The third *Voice* wherewith God presseth people to their duty, is by the voice of promises: What is the great voice of the Covenant of promises? it is, give obedience to commanded duties, this is clear in Ezek. 11. 19, 20. *And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you: and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and I will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them, &c.* As it were, all the great promises of the Covenant have this promise, *Obej and ye shall live*; it is obedience that leadeth us to the possession of the promises.

The fourth *Voice* whereby God presseth persons to the doing of known duties, is, by the voice of all the mercies which we meet with: I say, the voice of them all is this, *O! give obedience to his commandments*, Yea, this is the very language of mercies. All the great things which God hath done to you, what is the scope and end of them all? It is, *O will ye come, and obey*.

Fifthly, doth not the great voice of our consciences, and of all the convictions which God rooves upon them, do they not say, *O! give obedience and obey him with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength*.

There is this last *Voice* whereby God presses people to the doing of known duties, and it is by the voice of all the publick Ordinances: what is the great voice of all these Preachings, which we daily Preach unto you, but this, *O! give obedience to the commands*.

Now I would say this unto you, O people in Glasgow; O! hath not God spoken to you by all these voices? Hath he not spoken unto you by mercies? Hath he not spoken unto you by threatnings? By the voice of the promises? by the voice of the Rod? by the voice of our consciences? and by the voice publick Ordinances? Oh! look that in the 26 Chapter of *Leviticus*, be not *Glasgows* plagues. Lord keep this place from

from Gospel condemnation; For it is a fearful and dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God: yet seven times more, yet seven times more, I tear be your plague. Oh! What can God do more to us nor he hath done? Have we not pressed this duty upon you, that ye would imbrace Christ, and that this duty might be our delight? If Christ cannot allure us to give our hearts away to him, (in a manner) he will force us to give our hearts to him. I confess it is sad to slight and disobey the voice of the Rod, God hath two times fearfully shaken the threatning Rod of his wrath over this City of *Glasgow*, in a few years, look that so many menacings of Gods Rods, be not the fore runner of some sad stroak from the Lord, now this is your duty to be hearkening to his voice: This is Christs first word, and his last word, and it is his best word. O! then take him and embrace him. I think there be seven steps of judgment, which are like to overtake us, if we hearken not to his voice. I say, God hath spoken much, and what can he speak more? and what can he do more? and what can we do less to him? I say, all the slighting of these threatnings of God, to you they are the fore-runner of these seven remarkable steps of judgment.

The first step of judgment which ordinarily doth befall slighsters and disobeyers of Gods voice, is, God shal slight their voice when they cry unto him, and Oh! is it any wonder that God stop his ear at all our prayers, because, it is not known that we stop our ears to his precious invitation and cry, which Christ hath to us, *O take me*. Therefore I say, O give Christ your heart, and then he will hear your voice.

There is a second step of judgment, which ordinarily befall these who slight these great and precious voices, by which he is speaking to us, and it is, be afraid that at last thou come not to this, that thou shalt have no answer from God, that God shal speak no more unto thee; yea, that thou come

come not to this, that God shall speak his last word unto thee, and have no more to say. I confess when God goeth from Preachings to Rods, it is an evidence that we are hard to be perswaded. It is said, when he makes the Rods our Teachers, and we will not be taught by them; though, I think, that that were a blessed Cross that should make us come to Christ. I think, Christ must do to us, as *Abraham* did to *Isaac*, he sent to *Isaac* to come to him, and he came not; *Abraham* then set his corn fields on fire, so that at last he might come. So, I think, Christ sets our corn fields on fire, that we may be constrained to come to him.

This is a third step belike of our judgment, and it is this, I fear, that sad and lamentable word is like to befall us, if we continue to slight this Gospel, *Ezek. 9. 10.* That all flesh may know that I the Lord have drawn forth my sword out of his sheath, it shall not return any more. Yea, God hath begun to draw the sword of his Justice out of his sheath, and who knows when he will put it up again? Is there any person who hath confidence or perswasion, that God will quickly sheath the sword which he hath drawn against us?

The fourth step of Judgment which lights down upon those that slight the voice of Gods threatening Rod, is, that which I think is more sad, *Ezek. 21. 11, 12.* The sword is sharpened and furnished, that it may glitter, and that it may make a sore slaughter, that it may be given into the hand of the slayer. And what know ye but your disobedience to all these voices, by which God hath been speaking to you, hath made him to draw his sword, and he is to deliver it into the hand of the slayer? And oh! who shall be the slayer, into whose hand the sword shall be delivered?

There is this fifthly, which shall be a step of our judgment,

ment, if we continue to slight all these voices by which God doth speak to us, and it is that word, Ezek. 20. 31. *As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be required of by you, I will cease now to have correspondence with you any more.*

There is this sixth step of judgment, which may and shal befall us, if we go thus on to slight all the voices of the Lord to us; as it is that word in Ezek. 22. 13. *I would have purged thee, and thou wouldst not be purged, thou shalt not be purged any more, till my fury, &c.*

There is this last step of our judgment, which I think is the cape-stone of all the rest; if we continue in all our slighings of the voices by which God speaks to us. By all appearance there shal be one of these two decrees past in heaven against us: first, either that in Hos. 4. 7. *Ephraim is joyned to his idols, let him alone.* Or secondly, that decree in Rev. 22. 11. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still, &c.* I say, to day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts in the day of provocation. Glasgow is yet within speaking terms to God, O! who knows how long it shal be so? Now if ye will not hear him in the still voice of the Gospel, O! will ye hear him especially in the whirlwind? There is nothing that will befall us, which will be the cape-stone of our misery so much as that, when Christ shal come and take his farewell. I think there are few of us who are here, who are within the sight of Christ; but I am sure there are many here which are within speaking terms to Christ.

Now what doth he require and call for at your hands? Doth not all the promises in the Covenant say, O come and take him? Doth not all the rods and sad dispensations which we meet with, say, O come, and take him? Doth not all the threatnings in the Law, say unto you, O come and take him? And doth not all your convictions of conscience whereby

your

your need of Christ is discovered, say this unto you, O come and take him? Are ye not surrounded about with many voices that cry out this unto the City, O come and take him? Therefore, O harden not your hearts to this pleasant voice. I have only these seven words to speak to you, and I shal close.

And first, God hath a threefold Rod, whereby he maketh himself known to a people; First, He hath the Rod of his mouth, whereby he makes known his word to us. Secondly, there is the Rod of his hand, and that is affliction and crosses. Thirdly, there is the iron Rod of destruction, when God doth utterly destroy, that destruction shal not rise up the second time. Now God hath been long speaking to you by the Rod of his mouth, and by the Rod of his afflictions and crosses; and O now beware, lest he come and speak to you by the iron Rod of destruction! Look that the Treaty which is betwixt Christ and you be not broken: O, be perswaded to lay hold upon your time, while it is with you.

Secondly, I would say this word unto you, I think the slighting of the sad and lamentable threatnings of God, which he hath threatned and denounced against you, is a sad fore-runner of some sad strokes from the Lord. Are there not many persons which slight threatnings through the want of faith? they believe not that such a threatning is true, and therefore I think it is like that God will preach to your senses, before you believe what he now preaches to your ear; I say, the day is coming, that before the threatnings of God be believed by some of you, he must preach to your sense, and make you to feel that which ye would not believe: And are there not many that will not make use of the threatnings, because they believe the threatnings is not to them? And therefore they make not particular application of the threatnings to themselves. I confesse, I think it were good for every one



of us to take home the threatnings to our own bosom.

Thirdly, Some will not take and make use of the threatnings, because they mistake what is their meaning. There are some that let Christ threaten them what he will, they are still in the dark, and cry out, O! what doth Christ mean by his threatening? This is clear from the practice of the Jews, John 7. 33, 34. compared with 35. and 36. verses. Christ threatens them with this, *Let a little while I am with you, and then I go unto him that sent me. Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come.* Now, what hinders them to make application of this threatening? It is in verses 35, 36. *What manner of saying is this that he said, Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come; will he go to the dispersed amongst the Gentiles, and teach the Gentiles? So they knew not the meaning of the threatening, and that hinders them to apply it.*

The fourth reason why many persons make not application of the threatnings, and it is ignorance of their own condition. Some persons will be living under such a sin, and yet when that sin is threatened, they will not apply it, because they know not their sin. Are there not some persons, that will not take with threatening for their worldly mindedness, because they call their Worldly mindedness, frugality? Are there not some persons, that when a Minister threatens against presumption, they will not take with it, because they think their presumption, faith and confidence? And there are not many things threatned against Hypocrisie, and few of them applied, and this is, because we think our hypocrisie, sincerity.

Fifthly, This marrs the application of threatnings to many, because God hath a mind to destroy them; therefore they do not apply threatnings: That is

a terrible word which is spoken of the Sons of Eli in 1 Sam. 2. 25. *Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them.* Some God hath a mind to destroy, and therefore they do not apply threatnings.

There is this sixth ground why persons will not make application of threatnings, and it is because ordinarily some persons are possessed with high thoughts of themselves, and too much self-love. There is nothing marring the application of threatnings so much as self-love: we have no will to believe any sad things against our selves.

Lastly, There is this which marring the application of threatnings, and it is our not knowing what a sad and sinful thing it is to slight, and not apply threatnings; I confess, I think it is a question that is hard to determine, whether the slighting of promises, or the slighting of commands, or the slighting of threatnings, be the greatest sin? But I am sure of this, our slighting of threatnings, is the rise of our slighting of promises, and likewise the rise of our slightings of commands. Now I shall say no more, O that ye were perswaded to hearken to God, that Christ might not be provoked to depart from you, and take his farewell. And to him who is able to help you to hold him till the breaking of the day, we desire to give praise.

SERMON

## S E R M O N IX.

*Micah 6. 6. The Lords voice cryeth unto the City, and the man of wisdom shall see thy name, heaſe the Rod, and who hath appointed it.*

**I**T is not much though a Christian be put in a furnace, but seven times more than ordinary, if one in the form and likeness of the Son of Man walk up and down with him in the furnace. Is it not Christs presence which makes a wilderness like the garden of the Lord? Is it not Christs presence which makes afflictions pleasant? Is it not Christs presence which makes a Crown of thorns, a crown of joy? Is it not Christs presence which makes heaven pleasant? And must it not be Christs presence that must make the earth pleasant also? I confess, desertion under the cross is one of the most sad and afflicting dispensations which a Christian can meet with: but however, ere long there will be a blessed exchange of cups, that instead of the cup of bitterness, which is presented to a Christian to drink (while he is here below) he shall have a cup of the eternal consolations that is above, presented unto him from the hand of the Lord.

I think a Christian may be poor in possession, but rich in hope. I think a Christian may not have much, as to his sensible enjoyments, but may not he cast up his eyes unto the eternal inheritance, and cry out, *Yonder is my portion, in that land are my lines cast?* There are these four things that I would say unto you, before I come to the words.

The first thing which I would have you taking notice of, is this, there are three things which a Christi-

an may meet with, which are unspeakable. First, Sometimes a Christian may meet with an unspeakable Sorrow, so that he cannot make Language of it, because of the anxiety of his Heart, but is forced to cry out that Word, *My stroke is heavier than my Groaning*. Secondly, A Christian may meet with an unspeakable Mercy, he may meet with such a Mercy and token of Love from the hand of the Lord, that if he were put to it, he could not make language of it, he could say no more to the commendation of his mercy, but this, *what shall I say more? he hath spoken it, and himself hath done it*. Thirdly, A Christian may meet with an unspeakable joy, he may be brought to that case and condition, that he cannot make language of his joy, according to that word, *1 Pet. 1. 8. Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*.

Secondly, I would have you taking notice of this, that it is exceeding much of the concernment of a Christian to believe and close with this truth, that there is not a grain weight of affliction in his Cup, which infinit wisdom doth not think fit should be there, and which infinit love did not put there: To know and rest upon this, that infinit wisdom and infinit love was at the mixing of the Cup, ( and his tender heart will carve no more out to us than we are able to bear ) this is an help to patience.

Thirdly, I would have you taking notice of this, I think there are some Christians that are forced to bless God more for their crosses than their mercy, and that they have been forced in their darkest nights, to cry out, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted*.

There is this fourthly, which I would have you taking notice of, that the cross of a Christian it hath two faces, an outward face and an inward face, and the outward face of the cross oftentimes seems the most unpleasant; but O! If a Christian could win to see the inside of his cross, he might sit down by the rivers of Babel, and there pen Songs of praise to God, even praise for this, that

he hath been afflicted; O! it is comfortable to the Christian that Christ hath gone to heaven by the way of the cross, that his blessed feet hath troden that way, and that his precious lips hath drunk of that Cup.

But to come to the words, we told you that there was five things in the words to be considered; *First*, That there was an excellent exhortation given to the people of *Israel* and *Samarita*, which in short is this, *Hear ye the voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it*; and from this exhortation ye may take notice of these five things; *First*, That every cross and sad dispensation which a Christian meets with, it hath a voice and language in it, therefore says he, *hear the voice of the Rod*, as if he had said, take notice what the Rod says, and what it calls for from you. The second thing to take notice of, from this command and exhortation is this, that it is the duty of a Christian to observe and give obedience unto what the Rod speaks and calls for, therefore is the command given forth, *hear the voice of the Rod*. The third thing that we take notice of from this command is, that there is a great unwillingness in persons to hear what the Rod speaks, and therefore the command is put home, *hear the voice of the Rod*. *Fourthly*, Take notice of this, that the voice of the Rod, and the voice of him that hath appointed it, are one and the same very thing, therefore these two are knit together, *hear the voice of the Rod, and him who hath appointed it*. There is this lastly, which we would have you taking notice of from this command and exhortation: It is a great point of spiritual wisdom for a Christian, to take up and hear the voice of the Rod, therefore it is said, *the man of wisdom shall see thy Name*. It is not every man that can take up what the Rod speaks, it is only the man that is endowed with much heavenly wisdom from God.

Now as for the first thing that we spoke from the words, viz. That every Rod which a Christian meets

with, it hath a voice in it. Before I speak to this, I would have you to take along these considerations.

First, It is a singular and most remarkable step of the good will of God, when he doth manifest the meaning of a Rod to a person or a people, Job 33. 10. *He openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction*, which is brought in as a singular favour from God, that is, he makes them to know what the Rod speaks: *Elisha* puts such a note of mercy upon this, that he thinks it a step of delivery from the Rod, *He delivers the poor from affliction*, how is this, that he opens their ears, and seals their instruction? It is, when God makes a person to take up the meaning of the Rod; for when he makes them to understand the voice of the Rod, it is half a delivery from the Rod; do you not know this, that when the cause of a disease is known, it is half healed? So when the end that God hath in sending Rods, is known and taken up; we may say, it is half removed.

Secondly, The Christians of old have taken much pains to know the voice of the Rods that they met with, as is clear from 2 Sam. 21. 1. where the land of Israel being three years under Famine, David went and enquired of the cause of that Rod: and it is likewise clear from Job 7. 20. where Job is exceeding desirous to know, why God set him up as a mark to his arrows, and that he was become a burden to himself.

Thirdly, We would have you to take notice of this, that it is exceeding anxious for a tender Christian to be under a silent Rod, to be under such a Dispensation that he knows not the Language of it, this is clear in Job 3. 23. where Job makes this the Cape-stone of his sorrow, that his way was hid, that is, he knew not what was the reason of God's contending with him, after such a way: as likewise it is clear in Job 10. 1. where Job is put to propose that Question to GOD, *Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?*

The fourth Consideration, that we would have you taking along with you, is this, it is exceeding hard for



for a Christian to profit by a Rod, till once he take up the meaning of it; and I shal give you these three grounds, why it is so hard for a Christian to profit by a Rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it. First, Because it is hard for a Christian to win to submission to the Rod, till he know the voice of it; it is the knowledge of the meaning of the Rod, that makes a Christian to cry out, *I was dumb, and opened not my mouth.* Secondly, Because as long as the meaning of the Rod is hid from a Christian, he knoweth not what remedy to go about to deliver himself from that Rod, but when he knoweth the reason of Gods contending with him, he hath a clear way before him, how to win out from the Cross. Thirdly, This is the reason why a Christian cannot profit by the Rod, till he know the voice and meaning of it, he cannot win to a solid closing with this truth, that God is in the Rod, till he win to the knowledge of the voice of the Rod in some measure, there is nothing more will help a Christian to cry out, God is in the Rod, than this, his knowing the reason of God's contending with him.

There is this fifth consideration that we would propose, a Christian may be long under a Rod, before he know the voice and language of it; we conceive this is clear in 2 Sam. 21. 1. where the Land of Israel is under three years Famine, before David could take up the reason of Gods contending with them: it is not to be supposed but David had made frequent Supplications to God, for understanding the meaning of that Rod, and yet there are three years interveening before he can know it.

The last Consideration that we would propose unto you, when a Christian wins to take up the voice and language of the Rod, he ought not to delay, but presently go about and answer it, this is clear in the practice of David, when he knew the reason of Gods contending with him, he immediately sets about to remove it. I confess it is a fault amongst many, they are more desirous

sirous to have their Crosses removed, than to have their Crosses sanctified unto them; some pray to have the bitterness out of the Cross, more than to have the bitterness of sin removed out of the Cross.

Now in speaking to the first thing in the words, viz. That every Rod and Dispensation of God, hath a voice and language in it: I shal speak a little to these four things: First, How a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the Rod in particular afflictions. Secondly, I would speak a little to some mistakes in taking up the voice and language of such a Rod and afflicting Dispensation. Thirdly, I would speak to this, how a Christian may be helped to give obedience to the voice of the Rod. Fourthly, I shal speak a little to eight or nine special voices which the Rod oftentimes hath; As for the first of these, viz. how a Christian may win to take up the meaning of the Rod and sad Dispensation, I shal prescribe unto you these six ways.

First, Be making serious application to the Throne of Grace, that God would give you light concerning such a Rod; This is remarkably clear in that instance in *Genes. 25. 22.* where *Rebecca* being under such a particular Rod, and she knew not Gods way in it, therefore she went and enquired of the Lord, and she received a particular and distinct answer to her case; and it is also clear in the practice of *David*, 2 *Samuel* 21. 1. *Israel* being under a great Rod of Famine, *David* went and enquired of the Lord concerning the meaning of it, and he met with a distinct answer. And this is likewise clear in *Job* 10. 2. where *Job* being in the dark, concerning the meaning of the Rod, he desires that God would shew him wherefore he contends with him. I will tell you seven sad cases which a Christian may be put to, of which Christ is an excellent Resolver. The first case which a Christian may be put to, which Christ hath exceeding good Skill to resolve, and it is that, *Song* 1. 7. Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon,

&c.

&c. When a Christian knoweth not where Christ is feeding, to go to him, he will sweetly resolve that question; for ye may know this, a Christian may be brought to these two steps of Desertion; First, Christ may be gone. And secondly, Ye know not in all the world where to find him, as in *Job 20. 13.* as that instance of *Mary*, and in *Job 23. 3.* *Job* hath not only lost God, but also he knoweth not where to find him. The second case which Christ hath exceeding good Skill to resolve, is this, *Who is the Lord, that I may believe in him?* That case or question which the blind man was put to, *Job. 36.* O will not Christ sweetly resolve that question? Is there any person that hath this question, *Who is Christ that I may believe in him?* The third case or question which Christ hath exceeding good Skill to resolve, *Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* Is there any here that is put to that question? go to Christ, and he can sweetly resolve it to you. The fourth question which Christ can best resolve, is that question which *Paul* had, *What will thou have me to do?* The fifth case in which it is best to go to Christ to get resolved, when a person is brought to this Strait, *I know not the mind of the Lord:* go to God and humbly ask, *O! why am I thus?* There is this sixth case, and it is *Job 7. 20.* *I have sinned, and what shall I do to thee, O thou preserver of man?* When thou art put to this case, Christ can answer sweetly thus, *Only acknowledge thine iniquity.* The last case which Christ can sweetly resolve, is in the words before the Text, *Wherewith shall I come before the Lord?* If thou be put to this question; no answer can be given to it but this, *The Sacrifices of the Lord are a broken and a contrite heart.* Now this is the first way how a Christian may win to know the Voice and Meaning of the Rod; even to make serious supplication to God, that he would make known to them his Name.

There is this second Way by which a Christian may win

win to know the Voice and Meaning of the Rod, if the Rod was timed to thee when thy Heart was under much distance from God; that probably is the meaning of the Rod, *it is good for thee to draw near to God*; Or if the Rod be timed unto a Christian when he is much taken up in pursuit after the things of the World, and if thy Rod tryst thee when thou art under much Formality in going about Duties; then by all appearance that is the Voice of the Rod to thee, *to stir up thy self to take hold on God*; So if a Christian would win to know the meaning of the Rod, let him compare his present frame with the timing of the Rod unto him.

The third Way how a Christian may win to know the Voice and Meaning of the Rod, is by reflecting on the manner and circumstances of the Rod; For this is certain, the sins of a people or person may be engraven on the Rod in very legible Letters, *so that he that runs may read them*: There are sometimes that the Rod doth preach our sins so plainly, that we need not to interpret it, this is clear, *Judges 1. 6, 7.* there is such a Relation betwixt *Adonibezek's* Judgment, and his sin, that he might read his Judgment, as he did his sins in his stroke, saith he, *Threescore and ten Kings having their Thumbs and their Great Toes cut off; gathered their Meat under my Table, as I have done, so GOD hath requited me, &c.* For now was he taken prisoner, and his Thumbs and Great Toes cut off! and it is clear from that word *Solomon* hath, *Proverbs 21. 23.* *He that stoppeth his ear at the cry of the poor, he shall cry, and God shall not hear him.* *Zeck. 7. 13.* *Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cryed, and they would not hear, so they cryed, and I would not hear, saith the Lord of Hosts:* Where ye may see a divine proportion and analogy betwixt the Rod and the Sin.

The fourth Way how a Christian may win to know the Voice and Meaning of the Rod, and it is by observing what hath been the mind of the LORD, and what

he

he calleth for from his people in Scripture, when they were put under such a Rod and anxious dispensation: Search what was Gods mind to the Godly in Scripture under such a Rod, and by all appearance it is yet his mind in the same Cross; according to that general Rule, *Ram. 15. 14*: For whatsoever things are written afore time, were written for our Learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.

The fifth way for a Christian to win to know the meaning of the Rod, is to be much in the observing the circumstances of the Rod, there may be circumstances in a Rod, by which a Christian may win to exceeding much light concerning what is of the Lords mind by such a Rod; it is known the observing of the circumstances of a Rod will help a Christian to these three things. First; That such a Rod is from the hand of the Lord. Secondly, That God in the midst of which remembereth Mercy. Thirdly, It will help a Christian to know the Voice and Language of the Rod, sometimes in the Cross it self a Christian cannot read Love, and yet in the circumstances of the Cross, he may win to read very much love.

There is this sixth and last way how a Christian may win to the knowledge of the voice and meaning of the Rod, and it is to be considering, that all the Rods and Dispensations which a Christian meets with, hath one of these three ends. First, The Rod is either sent to a Christian, that he may mortifie his predominant Idols; Or Secondly, For exercise of his predominant Grace. Or else, Thirdly, That he may be put to the exercise of that which ought to be his predominant duty.

These are Voices and Languages of the Cross which a Christian meets with: And I would only by the way say these two things to you, First, It is easier to bear a Rod patiently, which is for the trial & exercise of our predominant Grace, than to bear a Rod pati-

endly, which is for the mortifying of our predominant idols: There is no Rod which a Christian can bear worse, than the Rod which strikes at the root of his predominant idols? So a proud man he can bear any cross better nor reproach; and a worldly-minded man can bear any cross better than poverty; so the cross which stands in direct opposition to our predominant idols, we have great difficulty to bring our Hearts to patient submission under it; are there not many, that when their idols are stricken, they cry out with that man in *Judges 16. 24.* They have taken away my gods, and what have I more? Is it not certain that when God strikes sometimes at the root of our predominant idols, we cry out with *Jonah*, *That it is better for me to die than to live?* Though I may say, the cross which we have least will to meet with, is ordinarily best for us: For (if so we may speak) our will and our well are seldom or never knit together; but precious Christ, his will and our well are oftentimes knit together. Secondly, I would say this by the way, there are ordinarily some Analogy betwixt our crosses and our sins: if the *Egyptians* did kill all the Male Children of the *Israelites*, by casting them into the River, God doth likewise kill all the first-born in the Land of *Egypt*; and if *Nadab* and *Abihu* offer strange fire upon Gods Altar, he will consume them with fire from Heaven; and if the *Sodomites* be taken up with the fire of Lust, God will bring down fire from Heaven and consume them.

Now the second thing which we promised to speak a little unto, was to some mistakes which Christians have concerning the meaning of the Rod.

And first, many think (indeed) the cross speaks Wrath when it speaks Love, and some when they cannot read Love in the hand of God, they think it is impossible to read Love in his heart: some think that Love and the Rod cannot be together at all: I say, God may never love a person more nor when he is correcting



recting him. But first, I would say to a person under that mistake, we never know by any of these things, whether love or hatred belongs to the person that is afflicted, *For all things happen alike to all: As it happens to the fool, so it happens to the wise man, to the righteous, even as to the wicked.* Secondlie, I would say this to the Believer that is under this mistake, he reads wrong, that reads Wrath only upon the Cross, for it is certain Love is written in dark Characters upon it, and the Spiritual Man may read them: Hence it is, *Heb. 12. 5, 6.* We are commanded to remember the Exhortation that speaks unto us, as unto Sons: *Say son, despise not thou the chastning of the Lord, nor saint when thou art rebuked of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

The second mistake concerning the meaning of the cross, is, some think that God can never answer their Prayers, so long as he is plaguing them, according to that strange Divinity, *Job 9. 16.* If I had called, and he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice. So this is the mistake, all the answers of their prayers are nothing, if God be contending with them.

The third great mistake concerning the meaning of the Rod, is, when persons begin to dispute their interest, when they meet with such a Rod and sad dispensation, and when they do not, (indeed) see what is the reason of Gods contending with them, when he puts them in the Furnace, presently to sit down, and reject their confidence, and cast away their hope, this is certainly a great mistake of the meaning of the Rod.

The fourth great mistake of the voice and language of Gods threatening Rod, is for a person to think Religion but vanities, and an emptie thing under the cross, a Christian may be brought to this, now I would not give a plack for Godliness, it is not worth at all, as is clear

clear from Psalm 73. 13. where he takes notice, he was plagued every morning, and the wicked was in prosperity about him, he crys out, *Verily I have washed my hands in innocency, and cleansed my heart in vain; yea, it is hard for a person not to cast off Religion, when God is contending with him. O, it is hard to have a great respect unto the ways of godliness under the cross.*

There is this fifth mistake under the cross, and it is to dispute the fellowship a Christian hath with God, according to that word of Gideon, *Judg. 6. 13.* If the Lord be with us, how then is all this evil come upon us? The Christian will cry out, I cannot reconcile Gods heart and his hand, I cannot reconcile love in God, and his being with me, and this Cross and Rod.

Now, Thirdly, I would speak a little to this, how a Christian may be helped to obey the voice of the Rod, and we conceive if ye will take along these things with you, ye may be helped to obey what the Rod calls for at your hands.

And first then, if the Rod call for the mortifying of such a particular Lust and Idol, it is incumbent for you presently to sit down, and bring up your hearts for a spiritual detestation of such an Idol that if God be punishing you for your Idols, ye must subscribe a Bill of divorce to them, and cry out, *what have I any more to do with idols? and say to them, get you hence, and cast them away to the moles and bats.*

There is a second way to help how a Christian may win to the obedience of the voice of the Rod, and it is, if the voice of the Rod be for the mortifying of such an Idol, I intreat you presently sit down and study the disadvantage of such an Idol, study also what hazard there is by keeping thy soul constantly knit to it, that when the voice of the Rod is to thee, O quice such an Idol, or such a *Delilah*, thou must then study to know what it is to thy disadvantage to keep such an Idol, and what is it to thy disadvantage

tage to quite it! I confess there are some that their Idols are mortified to their light, before they be mortified to their Affections; yea, there are some they have a constrained Mortification, their Idols are mortified, and die to them, before they be mortified to their Idols.

Thirdly, If the Voice of the Rod be this, stir up such a Grace, and be much in the exercise and practice of it; then I say, study to know that there is as much spiritual advantage in the real and spiritual exercise of such a Grace, as ye can lose by all the Rods ye can meet with. Is it not certain that Job gained as much spiritual advantages by the exercise of his Faith, and of his Patience; yea, much more than in losing all the things that he lost! If a Christian once knew that his riches consisted in the exercise of his Grace, there would not be a Rod sent for the Trial and Exercise of his Grace, but he would take it cheerfully in his own arms.

The fourth way how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the voice of the Rod, and it is, if the voice of the Rod be for the tryal of thy predominant grace, and for the exercise of it, then I say, consider this, that the tryal and exercise of thy predominant Grace by the Rod, it shall have (if it be sanctified) a glorious and excellent issue and peace, it is the Rod that hath most noble advantages, that is immediately erected for the tryal of thy predominant grace.

The sixth way how a Christian may win to obey the Voice of the Rod, and it is, If the Voice of the Rod be, that thou should set about the exercise of such a Duty, then endeavour seriously that all impediments and lets to that Duty be laid aside; as if the Cross calls for the exercise of Faith, or if the Cross call for the exercise of Prayer, then I say, remove all things that may be impediments to hinder thee from the exercise thereof; or from the exercise of Faith; leave (as it were) thy Servants and thy Asses at the foot of the  
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the Mountain, and go thou up and sacrifice all thy idols and lusts.

The seventh and last way how a Christian may be helped to win to obey the Voice of the Rod, if the Voice of the Rod be to be much in the exercise of such a duty, then study to have the lustre of duty, and the beauty thereof commended unto thee. O! prayer is a thing which doth much good unto us. I think this is the reason why God hath contended with many, that he would make duties sweet to them, and he would make sin bitter.

Now the fourth thing that I shall speak a little unto, is, what ought to be a Christians duty while he is walking under a silent Rod, and knoweth not the Voice of it, and I would give you these five directions how a Christian should carry himself under a silent Rod.

First, he would know God to be just, though he knoweth not for what he contends with him.

Secondly, He would be serious in making Supplications to God, to know the distinct meaning of such a Rod; I confess sometimes we take the Rod to be silent, because we cannot hear the Voice of it; but oftentimes the silence of the Rod is from this, that we know not the Voice of it, and we hear it not, though he speak to us in an audible Language; but if a Christian be under a silent Rod, it becomes him then to go to God with this, *I have sinned, I will do so no more, shew me wherein I have offended.*

There is this third direction which I would give to a Christian under a silent Rod, he would be serious to know what is the reason of Gods keeping up his mind from him in such a Rod: I say, when the Rod is dark, and the Cross is silent, it is suitable then to say, what is the reason of this, that God doth not let me understand the voice and language of the Rod? I confess there may be sad things hinted at when God puts a Christian under dark and dumb crosses, however, although it be so, I think it is good for

for us to be walking submissively in the dark, for he will guide the blind in the way that they know not; sometimes it is better for us to have dumb and silent crosses, than to have a speaking cross.

The fourth direction, the Christian would study to bring his heart to a tender and spiritual frame; for sometimes our not understanding the voice of the Rod, it is because we are not spiritual.

Lastly, I would give this direction to the Christian who is under a dark and silent cross, study at that time to have thy heart most united to Christ, for at that time thou art most ready to fall: O? that is a time when the devil fishes most, because that is the Christians drummy water (so to speak) O? it is known, the Devil never gets any advantage over a Christian so much as when he knows not the meaning of the cross: I confess the devil will tell you a false meaning of a cross, he can interpret the language of a cross after another way than God doth interpret it.

Now being to choose our discourse, I shal name these eight or nine observations concerning the cross, which I would have you taking notice of.

First, When a Christian doth first meet with a cross, he may be patient and submissive under it, and yet if the threed of the affliction be spun out to any length, he may turn impatient. I confess it is not much the first day that the cross meets with us to be patient; but let the cross ly on us, then we will cry out why is it that God deals thus with me? this is clear in the practice of Job, when first he met with the Cross, he could take it in his arms, and cry out, *The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be his Name.* But let the cross ly a little while on Job, then he will cry out, *I choose strangling and death rather than life.* A green wound is half whole, (as we use to speak) but let once our wound begin to fester, then we will be impatient.

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The second observation which we would have you to take notice of concerning the cross. There are five sorts of blasphemy, which one that is under a cross may fall into; First, he may fall into that blasphemy, of calling God unjust, according to that word, *Ezek. 18. 5. Yet ye say, the way of the Lord is not equal, &c.* The second sort of blasphemy is, when we call God unfaithful, according to that strange word, *Jer. 13. 18. Wilt thou be altogether unto me as a liar, and as waters that fail?* O! do we not think that God is not half so good as his word under the cross? The third sort of blasphemy is, when we call God weak; there are sometimes we are brought to that, *Is there no balm in Gilead? and is there no Physician there? my break is grievous, and my wound is incurable.* Sometimes when we are under the cross, we think it is above Gods power to set us free from it. The fourth sort of blasphemy which a man may have under the cross, and that is when he chargeth God with changeableness; I think Christians under the Cross, are like men first going to Sea, when they go first out from the Haven, or by a Rock, they think that they are standing still, but the Land beside them is moving and stirring; so when first we come under the cross, we think God is changeable, but we are still the same. The fifth sort of blasphemy which one may have under the cross, and that is, when he chargeth God with forgetfulness; you know that forgetfulness is the property of an ingrate man; and O! if you call God ingrate or unthankful, you may call him any thing. I confess, I think Christ forgets nothing of a Christian but his wrongs.

The third observation concerning the Cross, is this, It is a speaking evidence of the want of a Son-like frame, if the cross do hinder us in the exercise of duties. I confess little profiting under the cross, speaks this much, that either we are not sons, or have not a son-like frame, for these who are the

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Lords children, when folly is bound for them, the rod of correction drives it away, there are many of us in our afflictions we are of *Abaz's* frame, we sin more and more in our afflictions.

The fourth observation that I would give you concerning the cross, is this, there are four things which a Christian would take up concerning his cross; First, He would take up unspeakable wisdom in his cross. Secondly, He would take up unspeakable love therein. Thirdly, He would take up unspeakable justice and holiness in his cross: And fourthly, He would take up these great advantages, that floweth to him from the spiritual use-making of his cross. Some Christians, they can read wisdom, justice and holiness on a cross, before they can read love upon it; but however, it is good to take up all these four in the crosses and sad dispensations which you meet with.

There is this fifthly, which I would say concerning the cross, there is not a cross and sad dispensation which a Christian meets with, but it is a gift and royal donation sent by the hand of Christ to him: there are some they look upon the promises as gifts, but I say to thee, thou must look upon thy crosses as gifts also, *Philip. 1. 29.* For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake. And there are some likewise that look upon their sensible enjoyments, but not on their crosses as gifts. I say, if once a Christian win to know that the cross is a gift, he would likewise win to patience under the cross.

The sixth observation concerning the cross, there are some peaceable fruits of righteousness that redounds to a Christian which is rightly exercised under the cross, *Heb. 12. 11.* Now no chastening for the present seems to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. I say, sometimes the Rod of a Christian

Christian is like *Aarons Rod*, it buds and blossoms in a night, and brings forth pleasant fruit.

The seventh observation is, the most rare enjoyments of a Christian are trysted to the time of his being under the Cross, when was it that *Jacob* saw the Angels of God descending, and ascending upon that ladder? was it not when he was forced to ly in the open fields? when was it that these three Children saw Christ in the likeness of the Son of Man? was it not when they were in the Furnace, when it was hot seven times more than ordinarily? when was it that *John* got such a vision of God? was it not when he was in the Isle of *Patmos* for the Testimony of Christ? when was it that *Ezekiel* saw the visions of God? was it not when he was sitting by the river *Chebar*, in the land of his captivity? and when was it that *Stephen* saw the heavens open, and Christ standing at the right hand of God? was it not when they were stoning him to death for the Testimony of Jesus Christ? I say, the most remarkable enjoyments of a Christian are trysted under the Cross, according to that word of the *Psalmist*, *To the righteous there ariseth light in darkness.*

The eight Observation that we would propose concerning the Cross. Oftentimes God trysts joy to a Christian under the Cross, when a Christian is beginning to lose his hope, and all things (as it were) growing dark about him, then doth light arise unto him, according to that wonderful and strange expression, *Zeck. 14. 7. At the evening time it shall be light, when there is more appearance of a darkness coming on.* Yet even at that time it shall be light; It is not certain, a Christian hath been sitting down at the mid-night of his afflictions, crying out *My hope and my strength is perished from the Lord*; and yet the Lord hath said to him, even by his dispensations, *thou art a liar*; have we not sometimes been casting away our hope, and the Lord hath loosed our Bonds, and

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and we have been as *Peter*, when he was loosed from his prison, we have been as though we had seen a vision.

Lastly, I would say this to commend the Cross, there are strange expressions in the Scripture that may make out to a Christian, that the Cross is not such a thing as many take it to be. The first expression is in that word, *Jam. 1. 2. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.* There are two things in that expression, which may make it strange; First, a Christian should count it all joy; It had not been so strange, if he had said, count it joy, or rejoyce when ye are afflicted; but, O! that is strange, *Count it all joy when ye are afflicted.* That which secondly makes it strange, *Count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations;* That is rejoyce ay more and more when you meet with many crosses. Then there is this strange expression, which may commend the Cross, and it is that word, *Job 5. 15. Happy is the man which endureth, &c.* There is very much a lot and dispensation. Some there is no people so cursed as these who are afflicted. But I say, a Christians afflictions are no small mercies and blessings. The third strange expression which may commend the Cross, *Job 5. 22. At destruction and famine shalt thou laugh, &c.* Not to have a sad look (as it were) on all the Crosses and afflictions that may come. The fourth strange expression which may commend the Cross, is that word, *Rom. 5. 3. We glory in tribulation, &c.* The last expression which may commend it, and it is the glorious ends that was upon these persons who are exercised under the Cross: According to that word, *Jam. 1. 10. Blessed is the man that endureth temptations, for when he is tried he shall have the Crown of life. I say, let a Christian comfort himself in this, That in six evils he will deliver him, and in seven no evil shall come near him: Let a Christian be put to never so much affliction, let him comfort himself*

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himself with this, that his Saviour was put to walk up  
and down in the earth, and had not wherewith to lay his  
head, and let him likewise comfort himself with this,  
that the day is coming, when he shall enter into those  
glorious and excellent habitations. What is the Cross  
of a Christian? Is there not much in Heaven to com-  
fort them against their Crosses? I shall not say much  
to press Christian submission under the Cross; I think  
it is more suitable to be enquiring after duty under  
a Cross, than to be enquiring how to escape out from  
under it? It is good to put all in Christs hand concern-  
ing the Cross, the manner of it; and the lengthning  
of it, and also the out-gate from under it. Now to  
him, who is able to make all things work together for  
the good, (even afflictions) unto his people, we desire  
to give praise.

John unto mine  
you

My dear  
FRIENDS

John  
John

*[Illegible handwritten text]*